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# RENEWAL OF " RELIGIOUS STRUCTURES

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## INTRODUCTION

# CO-RESPONSIBILITY: DOMINATING IDEA OF THE COUNCIL AND ITS PASTORAL CONSEQUENCES

LÉON-JOSEPH CARDINAL SUENENS

## VATICAN II

### *Vatican II and the Past*

THE Second Vatican Council marked the end of an epoch, or even of several epochs, depending on one's historical perspective. It brought to a close the Constantinian era, the era of "Christendom" in the medieval sense, the era of the Counter-Reformation and the era of Vatican I. In reference to *that* past, it marks a turning point in the history of the Church.

In reference, however, to a more immediate past—namely, the first half of this century—we see it not as a term but as a culmination, as the heir and beneficiary of those great currents of renewal which were and are at the very heart of the contemporary Church: scriptural, liturgical, patristic, theological, and pastoral renewal. The Council caught and channelled the waters of these streams, which had grown stronger and stronger under the influence of the Holy Spirit, and it resolutely directed them towards the open sea which was their goal.

When opening the Council, John XXIII had expressed the

hope that it would be a springtime for the Church. His hope has been abundantly fulfilled; yet springtime, too, has its phases.

There is no denying it: at the moment, some of the faithful—who had not noticed the slow theological ferment of the previous two or three decades, nor taken account of a certain “rising of the sap” that the council was to make its own and follow in several directions—have been confused by certain discontinuities with the past. They were startled at conciliar debates that called into question certitudes and usages that had been considered classical. They find it difficult to distinguish that in the Church which belongs to her changeless Tradition, from “traditions” which, though sometimes of great antiquity, remain marginal or accidental.

In nature, spring unfolds at the price of a certain amount of pruning. But the pruning knife is an instrument to be used with discernment. When trees are pruned at the end of winter, it is surprising to see how many dead branches and wild shoots clutter the ground. Seeing the trees thus stripped of their foliage, it is hard to believe that new life will come forth from this impoverishment. Yet, springtime does emerge from winter. As the years go on, it will be seen even more clearly that this Council was a very fruitful one, and that it pruned back certain shoots only to assure fuller development of the tree.

### *Vatican II and the Future*

Moreover, to grasp the significance of the Council, it is not enough to relate it to a certain past that it brings to a close: we must see it also in terms of the possibilities that it contains. For, in its turn, it has become as of now a new point of departure, as Pope Paul VI so forcefully reminded us:

“The conciliar decrees are not the end of a journey, but rather a point of departure for new destinations. The spirit and the renewing breath of the Council have yet to penetrate the life of the Church to its depths. The seeds of life planted by the Council in the soil of the Church have yet to come to their full maturity” (Letter of Sept. 21, 1966; *Osservatore*, Sept. 26–27).

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The invitation now is to locate Vatican II in the context of the future. For the Church is a Church that is on her way, a pilgrim Church; she never has the right to come to a full stop, and her pauses are only in preparation for new stages on her journey.

In some respects, the Church is always "transient." "They call me a transition Pope," John XXIII used to like to say, and he added: "It's true, but the continuity of the Church is made up of transition after transition."

Whether we wish it or not, we are now on the way towards some Vatican III, whose outlines are still vague and indiscernible. This Vatican III must, in its turn, draw out what Vatican II contained only in germ; it must unfold what is now only virtual, and make explicit its riches for the future.

The Church, rooted in the past though she is, is also impulse towards the future; she is faithfulness and hope. For her, to be renewed does not mean simply to return to the past or to restore it as it was, but rather, in continuity with the past, to go forth to meet the Lord and to answer his new invitations. Christ was yesterday, he is today, and he will be tomorrow; Christ is himself the past, the present, and the future of the Church. We must live the experience of Vatican II in that perspective, which will lead us from the present stage to the next one, from the "already" to the "not yet."

Every human endeavour, no matter how grandiose, has a certain tribute to pay to human limitations: our vision never takes in the entire horizon; we all bear the treasures entrusted to us "in earthen vessels." A Council too must needs bear the mark of the times, and of the men who took part in it. This it is which gives it its historical meaning, and hence its limitations—and, by that very fact, its necessary openness to the future.

The Second Vatican Council was initially handicapped by the fact that it came as something of a surprise, and by certain shortcomings in the preparations for it. "When it comes to Councils," John XXIII would say with his fine smile, "we are all novices."

Analyzing the preparatory *schemata* of the Council in retrospect, and comparing them with the definitive texts that were

voted on, we can measure the long journey by which the Council had to work its way out of the excessively narrow, juridical, and defensive theology that underlay the original projects.

Those who took part in the Council from day to day can only be filled with awe at the impulse of the Holy Spirit that guided the progress of its work. And clearly, even the delays in the conciliar work had the advantage of allowing the Fathers to grow in their awareness of its implications, and to create among themselves a unity of mind and soul.

Another obstacle to the full flowering of the Council, astonishing as this may seem at first glance, was the quest for this unanimity. It is both the glory and the weakness of a Council to strive to win the assent of all its members to the proposed texts and decrees. It is its glory, because we are here working out the supernatural mystery of the Church, which is a mystery of communion. A Council is no parliament, where a majority can lay down the law to a minority. To express this concern for unanimity, the Council agreed in advance to require the assent of three-fourths of the Fathers, dependent of course upon the ultimate agreement of the Pope. In fact, the important votes were for the most part nearly unanimous.

This unanimity, however, had its price. It can happen, in the course of debate, with the interplay of numerous amendments—which, in principle, must be integrated into the document—that certain texts lose their point, or at least their forcefulness. Historians of the future will have to disentangle, here and there, the central affirmation from the interpolations and embellishments. The quest for a “common denominator” does not always do full justice to the underlying thought of the majority, and it is not easy to bring into synthesis elements which have originated in quite divergent currents of thought. Hence the texts are sometimes far richer in what they imply than in what they openly affirm.

In the conciliar texts, there are some formulas whose aim was to counterbalance other assertions, or to win wider assent; these were, in some cases, like temporary stopping-places in a long climb. Because of the interplay of circumstances—and of

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men—certain emphases did not manage to have their full force for renewal. But the seeds are there, like unopened buds awaiting the sun: it will be the task of men moved by the Holy Spirit to draw out all the vital riches contained in the conciliar texts—and, for that matter, in all that was said both inside and outside the Council hall, but which has become an integral part of Vatican II.

Another element situating the Council in history, and therefore calling for further development, is that its underlying theology was Latin rather than Eastern in character.

If at the outset there was a certain rather strikingly unilateral "Latinism," the influence of the Eastern Fathers brought about a number of significant corrections, in which they were almost always supported by the majority. At the end of the apse of St. Peter's, the Fathers could contemplate Bernini's *Chair of Peter*, held aloft by the Latin Fathers Augustine and Ambrose, and also by the Greek Fathers Athanasius and Chrysostom. The symbolism was expressive, but only gradually did it enter into the awareness of the Council; no doubt there is still a considerable distance to be travelled in that direction.

Patriarch Maximos IV has written, "There are doors which the Holy Spirit has opened, that will never again be closed." This Eastern complementarity is a priceless element of balance and of counterweight. As Cardinal Colombo, Archbishop of Milan, aptly remarked, "Just having two eyes enables a man to estimate the distance between objects, so, it seems to me, the Eastern view of many of the problems debated in the Council, joined with the Western view, enabled me—and still enables me—to grasp more fully the teaching of Christ."

## CO-RESPONSIBILITY IN THE CHURCH OF TOMORROW

If Vatican II has not solved all the problems, it has at least opened up some limitless horizons: in the soil of the Church it has planted, as Paul VI said, "seeds of life" that should now

begin to produce fruit. Were I asked which of these seeds of life is richest in pastoral consequences, I should reply: the re-discovery of the People of God as a totality, and the co-responsibility that flows as a consequence from it for all the members.

By presenting the Church first of all as the People of God, we are placed at the outset beyond the organic and functional distinction of hierarchy and laity, at a level common to all: baptism. Whether pastors or not, all Christians are, first and foremost, "the faithful" in the deepest sense of the term, that is, *believers*.

—The sacrament of baptism is *constitutive of* the Church; the other sacraments are *located in* the Church: the perspective is different.

—Baptism is the root of all religious life, whether consecrated or not: it is the starting-point from which unfold all the various vocations, functions, and charisms.

—In the Church of God, there is a primary and fundamental equality of all the members: there is no super-baptism, there are no castes, no privileges.

The greatest day in the life of a Pope is therefore not the day of his election or coronation, but the day of his baptismal consecration.

We must take note of these basic truths, for they are essential to the life of the Church, and they must govern all her choices and all her attitudes.

There has been too much confusion between the terms "laity" and "faithful." A pope or a bishop or a priest is not a layman, but he is one of the faithful, precisely as he is one of the baptized, a Christian. His primary duty is to live his Christianity in obedience to the Gospel, and his particular mission has its starting-point there. There is a certain theology of the laity that has attributed to the layman, as such, what in reality belongs to him rather as a Christian.

It follows from all this that the Church is the concern of everyone, and that each one must fit his personal responsibility into that of all the faithful. This co-responsibility in the Church is found at several levels:

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- Co-responsibility of the bishops with the pope.
- Co-responsibility of bishops among themselves.
- Co-responsibility of bishops and priests.
- Co-responsibility of clergy and laity.
- Co-responsibility of service.

At each of these levels, Vatican II has planted "seeds of life," and has created institutions intended to translate into practice each of these co-responsibilities with its own particular qualities. Forced as I am to restrict my choice of topic, I should like to offer you a few reflections on co-responsibility at three of these levels: that of bishops, that of "clergy-laity," and finally that of theologians.

### *At the Episcopal Level*

During the symposium of European bishops held in The Netherlands last July, Archbishop Marty of Rheims openly made a moving examination of conscience on the manner in which he had assumed episcopal responsibility prior to the Council, and on his subsequent comportment. Humorously and humbly, he underlined the contrast and the transition—from a certain unconscious paternalism and friendly condescension, to the direct and open dialogue which is the distinctive feature of the new era. We all recognized ourselves in this picture, which called to mind situations that no longer exist; we all understood that the profound doctrinal reality of episcopal authority, while remaining changeless in itself, needs to be clothed in new modalities of function in the context of today.

Let it be acknowledged, moreover, that such a psychological transition is not accomplished overnight; some leeway will have to be allowed for trial and error. What matters, above all, is the general direction to which one is committed, and which governs one's choice in matters of detail.

There exists no training programme for the duties of organizing the pastoral effort of a diocese. They taught us a lot of things in the seminary, but none of the courses dealt with or-

ganizing a diocese or a parish, or with group dynamics and the laws of collective psychology.

The criticisms coming from almost everywhere in the world about diocesan structures, about their "impersonalism" and "anonymity," are too consistent not to be given attentive study. For while the system could doubtless be in some measure corrected by the efforts of individual men, the fact remains that the system itself has its own internal *lacunae* that call for remedies.

This is all the more true inasmuch as pastoral care, which until yesterday was practised in a highly individualistic manner, is going to become more and more a matter of structured and coordinated teamwork. And this supposes the systematic bringing together of many efforts in mutual trust and collaboration.

All this *within* the diocese. But we are also becoming aware now that a particular church does not exist within the Church universal as a self-sufficient whole. It must in its turn be in a state of openness and communication with its sister-churches of the same country or region.

The idea of the bishops' co-responsibility among themselves emerged very strongly during the Council, which was itself a constant exercise of that co-responsibility. Even before the Council, to be sure, there had been episcopal conferences bringing together the bishops of a region or a country, but for the most part these had no definite status. By giving them definite duties to accomplish, the Council gave them new impetus, and thereby opened the way to a very broad de-centralization in the Church.

Nor, for that matter, did the movement halt at national boundaries: there have sprung up episcopal conferences on the continental level, as, indeed, the bishops of Latin America had already been joined in a great confederation (CELAM) even prior to the Council. In Rome itself some of these conferences have come to birth, such as the European Episcopal Conference that is now taking shape. In his message of greeting to the First Symposium of European Bishops, gathered in The Netherlands last summer, the Holy Father not only voiced his joy at seeing

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such a gathering, but qualified it as "necessary." All this is very rich in promise for the future.

This enlargement of horizon is an invitation to every bishop to put "Church" ahead of "diocese" in his thinking—for the reality of diocese is best understood in the context of the Church universal.

But episcopal co-responsibility comes into play not only on the horizontal level; it is taking shape now also in the vertical line than links the particular churches to Rome.

In setting up the Synod of Bishops as a permanent institution, Pope Paul wished to institutionalize the dialogue between centre and periphery which the Council had so happily begun. By gathering around him periodically some 200 bishops, chosen for the most part by their peers, he has opened up possibilities of very close contact and exchange of views.

This is no "miniature Council": at a Council, all the bishops of the world attend by right, and with deliberative vote; only certain delegates of the world episcopate will take part in the Synod, and with merely consultative power. Yet the Pope has not excluded the future possibility of giving deliberative voice to the Synod. Living experience must precede legislation, and it is experience that will reveal, as things proceed, all the pastoral implications virtually contained in the Synod.

### *At the "Clergy-Laity" Level*

Vatican II did not succeed in assigning to the laity their proper place in the Church. Not that it is for the laity to judge concerning matters of faith—this belongs to bishops alone—but it is for them to give real aid in promoting, from within, the pastoral renewal.

At the first Council at Jerusalem, the decrees began with these words: "It has seemed good to the Apostles and the Ancients, along with all the Church, to decide that . . ."

Vatican II did not bring the co-responsibility of the laity into play on the scale one would have wished, nor with as wide a

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representation as would have been desirable. In this, too, it bears the mark of the time at which it took place. Vatican II suffered from the fact that the theology of the laity has not yet reached its maturity.

We all know how little there is about the laity in the Code of Canon Law—fortunately being revised now. Under the title “De Laicis” there are two articles, the one asserting their right to receive spiritual goods and the necessary helps to salvation, and the other forbidding them to wear the cassock unless they are seminarians or sacristans. It is a bit meagre! Fortunately, there has been progress in the life of the Church since 1917, the publication date of the Code; but there still remains a long way to go before that life can find adequate juridical expression.

At present, we are witnessing an ever fuller entry of the whole Christian community into liturgical worship; renewal of the sacramental aspect of pastoral care includes an insistence on the communitarian dimension that belongs to each of the sacraments.

At the moment, this co-responsibility of the laity is still seeking institutional forms. Two of these forms are coming into being in several countries: at the parish level, the parish council; and at the diocesan level, the pastoral council which was suggested by the Vatican Council itself.

### *At the Level of Theologians*

If co-responsibility is becoming a more and more prominent element in the life of all the Church, it is especially important that a sharing take place in the domain of theological thought, which is of necessity the point of departure for any sound pastoral care.

Both before and during the Council, we suffered from the lack of dialogue among theologians who were of divergent schools or trends.

In order to assure a better doctrinal balance between the centre and the periphery, one important transformation has al-

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ready been accomplished: the Congregation of the Holy Office has become the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Certain of its earlier procedures have been abolished—to no one's regret—and the number of its consultors and assessors has been increased. The bishops of the world appreciated the fact that they were consulted about a series of doctrinal propositions: even if this did not allow a confrontation or an exchange of views properly so called, it did at least provide for a very wide enquiry.

All this is moving in the direction desired by the Council; but there is still need, I think, to go forward in more resolute fashion if we are to establish real dialogue between the centre and the periphery. It is essential, in fact, that there be a constant circulation of ideas in the Church. Doctrinal vigilance is needed, and theologians have an irreplaceable ecclesial role. But the determination and the safeguarding of orthodoxy must never become the monopoly of a certain school or of certain theologians.

What I should like to see, then, is dialogue among the various theological schools, and inter-university conferences. It is my view that our faculties of theology have a role to play not only during Councils, but permanently in the life of the Church. Dialogue at this level will create a unity of spirit, a deep sharing, that will prepare the way for decisions of the magisterium. This would be the best possible response to the invitation which Pope Paul addressed to theologians on October 1, 1966, when he told them: "Develop a spirit of communion with the whole Christian people, and with the sacred hierarchy; develop too a communion among yourselves, as theologians." A close collaboration of this sort among theologians could render priceless services in the pastoral domain.

Our medieval cathedrals were built thanks to the cooperation of nameless stone-cutters, united in a common effort; theology, too, is built up by collaboration. We shall still have need tomorrow of that sharing which we found so helpful in the elaboration of the conciliar texts. Only a theology that is built "in and for the Church" answers fully to its true vocation. We have

urgent need of such a theology, because we need a pastoral care which is based on a common intellectual effort.

If we have insisted on the need for continuing this theological collaboration that was so fruitful at the Council, it is not with any thought of submitting the magisterium to the authority of theologians, but rather in order that the magisterium, fully informed and in possession of all the data of a problem, may be able to speak its authentic and authoritative word.

Moreover, it will have been noticed how very careful the Council was in its texts to avoid entering into theological controversies. The Doctrinal Commission willingly opted for whatever formula would be closest to the bare truth of faith, stripped of any theological options that were still the object of free discussion. This served to emphasize not only how precious is the contribution of theologians in delimiting doctrinal affirmations and weighing the force of their wording, but also what special weight attaches to the truth as proposed by the magisterium.

In a world where intellectual anarchy reigns, there is more place than ever for this teaching function which the Lord entrusted to the Apostles, and especially to Peter. It is an incomparable advantage for the Church to have, in Peter and in his successors, this living centre of reference and of communion in that faith which is the very basis of the Church's life. "I have prayed for you, Peter," said Jesus, "once you have been converted, strengthen your brethren."

Since Rome is, and should remain, the centre of Christendom, her message needs to be catholic in scope. The Church is neither Latin nor Greek, neither Western nor Eastern. The Word of God cannot be fettered; it must be set loose from the limitations of every human commentary, and must cut across all the schools of theological thought, in order to be "all things to all men."

In a world that is in process of unification, the Church lives her catholicity on a continental scale. Her word must be as pure as a spring, yet as wide as the ocean. It would seem, therefore, that in labouring at theological co-responsibility, we are working for nothing less than the most authentic possible shining-forth of the Church herself.

## **RENEWAL OF RELIGIOUS STRUCTURES**

# 1.

## RENEWAL OF STRUCTURE VERSUS RENEWAL BY THE SPIRIT

JAROSLAV PELIKAN

*Ecclesia semper reformanda:* this is the perennial tension between Spirit and structure. When Jeremiah the prophet denounced a false trust in the deceptive words, "This is the temple of the Lord," and promised that the new covenant and the new law would not be grounded in an external structure but in an inner Spirit, he was sounding the theme of this tension. That theme was echoed, often in the very words of Jeremiah, by Luther and other reformers of the sixteenth century. The Reformation, too, was an affirmation of renewal by the Spirit versus a mere renewal of structures. There are, to be sure, noteworthy differences between Jeremiah's reformation and Luther's: on the one hand, Luther was significantly more conservative than Jeremiah in his usual language about the structures; but on the other hand, the work of Jeremiah did not—that is, did not quite—lead to schism. Nevertheless, the tension between Spirit and structure is a fundamental one, not only in the eventual outcome of the Reformation, but in its very program.

As the central document for this investigation, I shall analyze Luther's *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church* of 1520, as much as possible in its own words. Other writings of Luther also take up the problem of Spirit versus structure; for example,

the 95 theses, the crucial essay against Latomus, the commentaries on Romans and Galatians. But in *The Babylonian Captivity* this problem is faced more overtly and the programmatic demands of Luther's Reformation are set forth more directly than anywhere else in his early works. It, more than any other document, is Luther's declaration of independence from the structures of the church.

### SPIRIT VERSUS STRUCTURE

It is interesting to note that while the term "Spirit," as could be expected, occurs very frequently in *The Babylonian Captivity*, the term "structure," too, is used a couple of times, and in both instances in a negative sense. Summarizing the arguments of Alveld's *Tractatus de communione sub utraque specie*, Luther comments sarcastically: "This he lays down as his 'infallible foundation' of a structure so worthy of the holy and heavenly 'Observance'." And a little later, commenting on the idea of transubstantiation, he declares that Aristotle's use of the terms "substance" and "accident" diverged from that of St. Thomas, so that "this great man is to be pitied for . . . building an unfortunate superstructure upon an unfortunate foundation." In both instances the term is used in the sense of Seneca's phrase, "the properties of words . . . both the structure and the argumentation," to refer to theological arguments and to their literary formulation, rather than in the sense of Westcott's statement, "Christianity . . . is not a structure of institutions," to refer to the institutional structures of the church which are being defended in those arguments. But the issue of "Spirit versus structure" is not, of course, confined to these instances of the term "structure."

The instances of the term "Spirit" and its derivatives are considerably more relevant to the issue. In fact, one such instance also happens to be the most succinct statement of the issue: "To such an extent has 'ecclesiastical' today come to mean the same as 'spiritual'!" The context of this *obiter dictum*

is an attack on those "guardians of 'ecclesiastical liberty'" whose principal concern is the real estate of the church, but who "with such verbal fictions . . . not only take captive the true liberty of the church; they utterly destroy it, even worse than the Turk." This equation of the ecclesiastical with the spiritual was the mark of an ecclesiology in which the distinction between Spirit and structure had largely disappeared, so that the institutional form of the church and its aggrandizement could all be justified in the name of the "spiritual." The clergy "imagine themselves to be the church . . . the 'spiritual estate' . . . when they are anything but that." The proponents of such an ecclesiology "prate . . . that what is decreed by the church is of no less authority than what is decreed by God, since the church is under the guidance of the Holy Spirit." Thus the governance of the Holy Spirit over the church and in the church was taken to be a guarantee that the church had "power to make new divine promises of grace." Luther was willing to concede that as there are "general concepts" by which the human mind is "clearly taken captive by the truth; and, rather than judging the truth, it is itself judged by it" so in the same sense "there is such a mind also in the church, when under the enlightenment of the Spirit she judges and approves doctrines; she is unable to prove it, and yet is most certain of having it." But this concession did not mean that Spirit and structure were to be identified, or that the institutional church could claim these prerogatives for its decrees about such things as sacraments in a simple and automatic way. "For who knows which is the church that has the Spirit? For when such decisions are made there are usually only a few bishops or scholars present." The structures of the institutional church, such as church councils, could err; for they were not entitled to claim for themselves an authority over that possession of the Spirit which, as a possession by the Spirit, had been promised to the church.

Therefore the equation of Spirit and structure was an injustice to both. It sought to limit the working of the Spirit and to claim for the structures of the church an authority over the Spirit to which they were not entitled. But it also deprived

## RENEWAL OF RELIGIOUS STRUCTURES

those structures of the power of the Spirit which had been promised to them. This was true, for example, of the fourth book of the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard and of its many commentators (one of whom, just ten years earlier had been Martin Luther). These sententiaries "at their best write only of the 'matter' and 'form' of the sacraments; that is, they treat of the dead and death-dealing letter of the sacraments, but leave untouched the spirit, life, and use, that is, the truth of the divine promise and our faith." Spirit there was, or at any rate could be, in the structures of the church; but when the distinction between Spirit and structure was blurred, as it had been both in medieval churchmanship and in the scholastic theology which provided that churchmanship with its justification, those very structures were crushed by a literalism that was both dead and death-dealing. This "worthless religion of this age of ours, and the most godless and thankless of all ages" paid more attention to the ritual trifles of human invention than to the commands and promises of divine institution. Thus "our theologians never taught us" an awareness of the gifts granted to the church and of the use to which these gifts ought to be put. "For if we are instructed with this judgment of the Spirit, we shall not mistakenly rely on those things which are wrong." It was to this "judgment of the Spirit" rather than to the theories of the theologians that the church was to look for guidance and instruction.

Where the distinction between Spirit and structure was ignored, one result was not only that claims were made for the structure that were appropriate only to the Spirit, but also that the spontaneous creations of the Spirit were by legislation made a part of the structure. An outstanding example, of which we shall be speaking in greater detail a little later, were the vows of the monks. Far from denying out of hand either the sincerity of these vows or the authenticity of the vocation to them, Luther recognized them as extraordinary phenomena in the Christian life. "Certain works are wrought by the Spirit in a few men, but they must not be made an example or a mode of life for all." Precisely because the Spirit had to have the

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freedom to call forth such heroic works when and where he pleased, it was wrong to reverse the priority of Spirit over structure and to make an "example or a mode of life," that is, an ecclesiastical structure, of this free activity of the Spirit in the Christian life. Indeed, it was wrong to reverse the priority of Spirit over structure even in the case of those structures which were not invented by men, but instituted by God. Significantly, both baptism and the eucharist are examined in *The Babylonian Captivity* for their "spiritual" rather than merely for their sacramental function. The death and resurrection in baptism, Luther insisted, were not to be understood as a "false sign," as though the statements of the apostle Paul in the sixth chapter of Romans were to be "understood only allegorically as the death of sin and the life of grace, as many understand it, but as actual death and resurrection." This referred to faith, so that "faith is truly a death and a resurrection, that is, it is that spiritual baptism into which we are submerged and from which we rise." For, contrary to the opinions of the ritualists, it was faith that "makes us free in spirit from all those scruples and fancies."

Even more explicit and detailed is the application of the term "spiritual" to the eucharist. As "faith is truly that spiritual baptism," so also no eating can give life except that which is by faith, for that is truly a spiritual and living eating. . . . The sacramental eating does not give life." The formula of Augustine, "Believe, and you have eaten," which was quoted frequently in the writings of the Reformers, provided patristic support for this emphasis upon faith as the true eating. When Luther's opponents on the Roman Catholic right quoted the discourses in the sixth chapter of St. John in support of their view of the eucharist, he replied that this chapter "does not refer to the sacrament in a single syllable," but rather "he was speaking of a spiritual eating . . . whereas the Jews understood him to mean a bodily eating and therefore disputed with him." (It is an interesting footnote on the history of exegesis that a few years later Luther's opponents on the Protestant left were to quote the sixth chapter of John, specifically the words "The

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flesh is of no avail," in support of their denial of the real presence, and that Luther was, if anything, even more vigorous in his rejection of that eucharistic interpretation of the discourses. Presumably, a "spiritual eating," whatever else it may have meant, did not mean a rejection of the real presence.) Later in the treatise, "Believe, and you have eaten" once more provides the occasion for a consideration of "spiritual eating." Luther, distinguishing between "word" and "sign" in the sacraments and therefore between "testament" and "sacrament" and, of course, giving "word" priority over "sign" and "testament" priority over "sacrament," comes to the radical conclusion: "Therefore I can hold mass every day, indeed, every hour, for I can set the words of Christ before me and with them feed and strengthen my faith as often as I choose. This is a truly spiritual eating and drinking." The constant refrain of "Spirit," "spiritual," and "spiritually" in these declarations make it abundantly clear that for Luther the correct alternative to an identification of Spirit and structure was the elevation of Spirit over structure, even over the structures of baptism and the eucharist.

#### THE SACRAMENTAL SYSTEM

Luther's elevation of Spirit over structure, therefore, did not spare even the most fundamental structure of traditional Christian piety, the sacramental system. More than either dogma or the papacy, it was the sacramental system that constituted the heart of religious belief and practice for the true Christian. Luther's attack on the sacramental system, which occupies most of *The Babylonian Captivity*, is therefore an important measure of how radically he was willing to subordinate structure to Spirit. "The invention of sacraments is of recent date," he was willing to say, thus denying the validity of the development of church structures out of which the sacramental system had emerged. Not only did the church have no right to create or designate sacraments; even an apostle did not possess such

authority. Therefore even if the Epistle of James, with its command to anoint, were by an apostle and even if that command implied a sacramental action (both of which Luther denied), "I would still say, that no apostle has the right on his own authority to institute a sacrament, that is, to give a divine promise with a sign attached. For this belongs to Christ alone." Apostolic precedent was not a sufficient ground for designating some action as a sacrament; "if everything the apostles did is a sacrament, why have they not rather made preaching a sacrament?" Because the "invention of sacraments" was a recent thing, the translation of *mysterion* with "sacrament" was misleading. "Nowhere in all the Holy Scriptures is this word *sacramentum* employed in the sense in which we use the term; it has an entirely different meaning. For wherever it occurs it denotes not the sign of a sacred thing, but the sacred, secret, hidden thing itself." And therefore the sacramental system was an elaborate complication of the *mysterion*, which was given in the word of God; in fact, "if I were to speak according to the usage of the Scriptures, I should have only one single sacrament, but with three sacramental signs."

This "one sacrament" was, of course, the word of God, which was communicated through each of the "three sacramental signs." In the use of the sacraments, therefore, it was essential to "open our eyes and learn to pay heed more to the word than to the sign, more to faith than to the work or use of the sign." Only in this way, for example, was it possible to justify the way of life attributed to the desert fathers in the *Vitae Patrum*, who "did not receive the sacrament in any form for many years at a time." On this basis Luther found it possible to designate even a non-sacramental rite as a means of grace and hence not to "deny, therefore, that forgiveness and peace are granted through extreme unction; not because it is a sacrament divinely instituted, but because he who receives it believes that these blessings are granted to him. For the faith of the recipient does not err, however much the minister may err." If, then, the decisive factor was not whether a particular rite could in fact qualify as a sacrament, it would follow that "there are still a

few other things which it might seem possible to regard as sacraments; namely, all those things to which a divine promise has been given, such as prayer, the word, and the cross." Nevertheless, Luther demurred at such a generalized application of the term "sacrament," preferring to affirm the historical development by which "it has seemed proper to restrict the name of sacrament to those promises which have signs attached to them." It was, therefore, much more than a prudential or a politic gesture when Luther assured his reader that "I do not say this because I condemn the seven sacraments, but because I deny that they can be proved from the Scriptures." The word had priority over the sacraments, be they two or three or seven in number, because in at least some sense the "sacramental signs" all were functions of the one "sacrament," which was Christ. It was, in fact, a general axiom which Luther enunciated: "What is true in regard to Christ is also true in regard to the sacraments."

The sacramental system was wrong not only because it contained so-called sacraments that had been instituted by human rather than by divine authority, but also because even those sacraments for which there was divine authority had become vastly more complicated, both in their meaning and in their mode of observance, as a result of human tampering. "The more closely our mass resembles the first mass of all, which Christ performed at the Last Supper, the more Christian it will be. But Christ's mass was most simple, without any display." The most wicked of all the abuses connected with the mass, the "third captivity" in Luther's catalogue, was the sacrificial interpretation of the eucharist, as a result of which all sorts of ritualistic elaboration and commercial exploitation had developed. In opposition to all this, Luther urged that "in the first place . . . we must be particularly careful to put aside whatever has been added to its original simple institution by the zeal and devotion of men. . . . We must turn our eyes and hearts simply to the institution of Christ and this alone." All else was a human invention, which added nothing to the word of Christ but only detracted from it. This primitivistic emphasis upon the

simplicity of the original institution belonged to the demand that ecclesiastical structures, including liturgical forms, be subordinated to what was "spiritual" in the sacraments, that is, to the word; for although "all the endless ceremonies doubtless symbolize excellent things to be fulfilled in the spirit, yet, because there is no word of divine promise attached to these things, they can in no way be compared with the signs of baptism and the bread." Doctrinal elaborations, too, had to be subordinated to the true, spiritual meaning of the sacraments. Transubstantiation was bad philosophy, and worse theology, according to Luther, not because he rejected the real presence, but because he insisted on it. In this affirmation of the real presence combined with a rejection of transubstantiation, he was glad to join his position to that of the common people, who "as they do not understand, neither do they dispute whether accidents are present without substance, but believe with a simple faith that Christ's body and blood are truly contained there, and leave to those who have nothing else to do the argument about what contains them."

The pastoral concern evident in this judgment is even more directly at work in Luther's treatment of private confession in *The Babylonian Captivity*. Luther was well aware of the abuses to which private confession was subject; it had, after all, been such an abuse that had called forth the 95 theses of 1517. Speaking as a priest who had responsibility for the administration of the sacrament of penance, he regretted "that we absolve sinners before the satisfaction has been completed, so that they are more concerned about completing the satisfaction . . . than they are about contrition," namely, more concerned about meeting the demands of an ecclesiastical structure (the prescription of certain satisfactions) than about obeying the spirit of a divine command (the call to contrition and repentance). He also knew, again from personal experience as a priest, not only "that contrition has been exposed to tyranny and avarice," but especially that "it is confession and satisfaction that have become the chief workshops of greed and power" and the sources of financial gain. Nor did he necessarily accept the exegetical

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proofs that sought to document a divine institution for the practice of private confession. Within the very argument of *The Babylonian Captivity* Luther took both sides of the question on the sacramental nature of penance. At the beginning of the treatise he proposed "for the present [to] maintain that there are but three [sacraments]: baptism, penance, and the bread." But by the time he had finished the treatise, he questioned whether penance could truly be called a sacrament, since it "lacks the divinely instituted visible sign, and is . . . nothing but a way and a return to baptism." None of this detracted in any way, however, from the worth of penance, especially of private confession. "I am," Luther said, "heartily in favor of it, even though it cannot be proved from the Scriptures. It is useful, even necessary, and I would not have it abolished. Indeed, I rejoice that it exists in the church of Christ, for it is a cure without equal for distressed consciences." The structure of private confession, then, was to be retained as an aid and a cure for the spirit.

Luther's ambivalence about the sacramental nature of penance is, of course, based on the long-standing difficulty of defining what constitutes a sacrament. Over the years of his polemics against the sacramental system, Luther actually devoted very little of his attack to the standard scholastic definitions, recognizing that any definition must be arbitrary. But on one aspect of the definition he was insistent: "To constitute a sacrament there must be above all things else a word of divine promise, by which faith may be exercised." Therefore "the mass is nothing else than the divine promise or testament of Christ." From this emphasis upon the promise in the sacraments it followed as a corollary that faith was required. "These two, promise and faith, must necessarily go together. For without the promise there is nothing to be believed; while without faith the promise is useless, since it is established and fulfilled through faith. . . . Without this faith, whatever else is brought to [the mass] by way of prayers, preparations, works, signs, or gestures are incitements to impurity rather than exercises of piety." There were many masses in the world, but very little attention to faith

in "the promises and riches that are offered to us." In fact, the principle difference between the sacraments of the Old Testament and those of the New was not "in the effectiveness of their signs," but rather in this, that the sacraments of the Old Testament "did not have attached to them any word of promise requiring faith," while those of the New Testament "have attached to them a word of promise which requires faith, and they cannot be fulfilled by any other work." Attention to "the signs more than the things they signify," to the sacramental action more than to the promise and faith, was the application to the sacramental system of the identification of Spirit and structure; but structure was put in its place when faith and the promise were made normative for the sacraments.

### THE PROBLEM OF INFANT BAPTISM

Yet Luther had to recognize that as soon as faith and the promise were assigned a normative position in the definition of the sacraments, a special problem would arise with regard to infant baptism. For as the eucharist had contributed most to the explication of what constituted a sacrament, so it had been baptism, and specifically infant baptism, that had shaped the development of the *opus operatum* as an explanation of sacramental efficacy. The demand for faith as a constituent of the sacraments seemed to undercut not only the *opus operatum*, but the validity of infant baptism. Thus even before the challenge of the Anabaptists compelled him to explore the problem of infant baptism in greater detail, Luther was obliged by his own polemics against the sacramental system to examine whether a consistent application of the priority of Spirit over structure would necessarily imply that baptism should be restricted to those who could have explicit faith.

He certainly seems to say as much in his expositions of the doctrine of baptism in *The Babylonian Captivity*. With emphasis he states: "The first thing to be considered about baptism is the divine promise, which says: 'He who believes and is

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baptized will be saved'." But that promise required faith as its corollary, so that Luther goes on to say: "But we must so consider it as to exercise our faith in it. . . . For unless faith is present or is conferred in baptism, baptism will profit us nothing." The word of promise from God's side and the receiving faith from man's side were decisive in any sacrament, including baptism. It was not the sacramental structure that saved, but faith and the promise. "Thus it is not baptism that justifies or benefits anyone, but it is faith in that word of promise to which baptism is added. This faith justifies, and fulfils that which baptism signifies." (It is significant that he does not say here, though he does elsewhere, that the word of promise is added to baptism, but rather that baptism is added to the word of promise.) When the sacramental structure was emphasized apart from faith the entire significance of baptism was distorted; and just this had happened in the church. "Now faith is passed over in silence, and the church is smothered with endless laws concerning works and ceremonies; the power and understanding of baptism are set aside, and faith in Christ is obstructed." The centrality of faith also connected baptism to the continuing life of penance; not the structure of the penitential system, but the life of the spirit was decisive, for "whatever we do in this life which mortifies the flesh or quickens the spirit has to do with our baptism."

The more Luther emphasized Spirit over structure in baptism and therefore assigned a central position to faith in the word of promise, the more problematical infant baptism seemed to become. For he had to admit that infants "do not comprehend the promise of God and cannot have the faith of baptism." Thus if, as he was arguing, "these two, promise and faith, must necessarily go together," the infant baptism would appear to be illegitimate. The insistence on faith in the word of the promise and the acceptance of infant baptism appeared to be mutually incompatible: "either faith is not necessary or else infant baptism is without effect." Within the context of the sacramental system against which Luther was protesting, a justification of infant baptism was possible on several grounds, but the most

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important of these was the very ground which Luther was attacking. Even in his discussion of infant baptism, therefore, he had to insist that "the sacraments do what they do not by their own power, but by the power of faith, without which they do nothing at all." With what seems so subjective an understanding of sacramental efficacy, what justification could be found for affirming the objective validity of infant baptism?

At least three traditional arguments appear here in *The Babylonian Captivity*. The one to which Luther resorts in response to his own objections about infant baptism is, as he puts it, what all say: "Infants are aided by the faith of others, namely, those who bring them for baptism. For the Word of God is powerful enough, when uttered, to change even a godless heart, which is no less unresponsive and helpless than any infant. So through the prayer of the believing church which presents it, a prayer to which all things are possible, the infant is changed, cleansed, and renewed by inpoured faith [*fide infusa*]." A second argument turns the tables on the objection to infant baptism, saying, in effect, that the faith of adults is more problematical than the faith of infants. For God had "desired that by [baptism] little children, who were incapable of greed and superstition, might be initiated and sanctified in the simple faith of his Word; even today baptism has its chief blessing for them." And he added: "If the intention had been to give this sacrament to adults and older people, I do not believe that it could possibly have retained its power and its glory against the tyranny of greed and superstition." The third argument was based on the objective structure of the ministerial office, which meant that the formula "I baptize you," about which there had been controversy between East and West, could be paraphrased to read: "What I do, I do not by my own authority, but in the name and stead of God. . . . The Doer and the minister are different persons, but the work of both is the same work, or rather, it is the work of the Doer alone, through my ministry." The later 1520's were to show that Luther had to go considerably beyond these arguments to provide a justification for the retention of infant baptism.

## PRIESTHOOD AND MINISTRY

The last of the arguments just cited in support of infant baptism, the objective structure of the ministerial office, creates special problems in *The Babylonian Captivity*. Luther recognized that the structure of the ordained priesthood, with its sacramental functions and indelible character, was indispensable to the entire institutional structure of the church, so that "if this sacrament [ordination] and this fiction ever fall to the ground, the papacy with its 'characters' will scarcely survive. Then our joyous liberty will be restored to us." This whole structure was, therefore, a "yoke of tyranny." Especially onerous was the tyranny of the ordained clergy over the laity, which exalted ordination by the ecclesiastical structure over ordination by the Holy Spirit; "trusting in the external anointing . . . they exalt themselves above the rest of the lay Christians, who are only anointed with the Holy Spirit." Once again it was the identification of Spirit with structure that lay at the heart of the problem. The command in Matthew 18, 17, "Tell it to the church," is taken to mean, "as these babblers interpret it, to the prelate or priest"—a specific instance of Luther's observation: "To such an extent has 'ecclesiastical' today come to mean the same as 'spiritual,'" and, one might add, "institutional" the same as both!

The equation of the ecclesiastical with the institutional meant that the position of the clergy was interpreted chiefly in a juridical and administrative way. As in the sacramental system the sign had been elevated over faith and the sacrament over the testament, so here faith had been subordinated to juridical authority and the laity to the clergy. Luther summarizes the contrast in an epigram: "They say nothing of faith which is the salvation of the people, but babble only of the despotic power of the pontiffs, whereas Christ says nothing at all of power, but speaks only of faith." Faith was the anointing with the Holy Spirit, but they made everything dependent on the "external anointing" of the priest. The founding of the church

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by Christ and the institution of the apostolic ministry were interpreted as the establishment of a legal institution and the designation of its powers and prerogatives. But "Christ has not ordained authorities or powers of lordships in his church, but ministries." The "despotic power" of the clergy over the laity was a perversion of the institution of Christ both because it deprived the laity of their own priestly rights and because it substituted juridical authority for ministry in the clergy.

Thus the command, "Tell it to the church," did not mean, "to the prelate or priest"; for the context made it clear that "this is said to each and every Christian." Not the position of a man in the institutional structure but his relation to the Holy Spirit was what made him a priest. Hence "every Christian is anointed and sanctified both in body and soul with the oil of the Holy Spirit," regardless of whether or not he had received the chrism administered by a prelate. Quoting the words of 1 Peter 2, 9 which were to be the *locus classicus* for the doctrine of the universal priesthood of all believers, Luther declared: "If they were forced to grant that all of us that have been baptized are equally priests, as indeed we are, and that only the ministry was committed to them, yet with our common consent, they would then know that they have no right to rule over us except insofar as we freely concede it." But the order of priority had been reversed here, too, so that the true priests were regarded as mere laymen while those who called themselves priests did not perform their priestly function. Baptism, then, was the sacrament of priesthood; ordination was merely the assignment of certain public functions. "Let everyone, therefore, who knows himself to be a Christian, be assured of this, that we are all equally priests, that is to say, we have the same power in respect to the Word and the sacraments."

Having said this, however, Luther went on in the very next sentence to clarify it: "However, no one may make use of this power except by the consent of the community or by the call of a superior. (For what is the common property of all, no individual may arrogate to himself, unless he is called.) And therefore this 'sacrament' of ordination, if it is anything at all,

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is nothing else than a certain rite by which one is called to the ministry of the church." The key word here was "ministry." As Luther had said a little earlier, "only the ministry was committed to them [the ordained], yet with our common consent." In this issue, therefore, the contrast between Spirit and structure takes the form of a contrast between ministry and power. In the words by which Jesus instituted baptism, "there was no conferring of any power . . . but only the instituting of the ministry of those who baptize." Similarly, in the words by which he instituted absolution, "there is no mention at all of power, but only of the ministry of the one who absolves." And in the words by which he instituted the eucharist, "nothing is said of power, but only of the ministry." Yet the same subordination of Spirit to structure which had robbed the laity of their priesthood had also robbed the clergy of their ministry. "As the priests are, so let their ministry and duty be. For a bishop who does not preach the gospel or practice the cure of souls—what is he but an idol in the world, who has nothing but the name and appearance of a bishop?" The laity, the true priests, had become subjects under the tyranny of the clergy; the clergy, who were supposed to be ministers, called themselves the priests.

## MONASTICISM

Among the clergy, a special place was occupied by the members of the religious orders, to one of which, let it be recalled, Luther himself belonged. The contrast between renewal of structure and renewal by the Spirit is especially evident in his treatment of monasticism. Early in the treatise on *The Babylonian Captivity* Luther recognized that a consistent application of the position he was voicing about the proper relation between Spirit and structure would lead to a drastic reorientation of ecclesiastical life, including the life of the religious orders. "But you will say: What is this? Will you not overturn the practice and teaching of all the churches and monasteries, by virtue of which they have flourished all these centuries?" Luther's response reflects

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his bravado, but something beyond bravado as well: "This is the very thing that has constrained me to write of the captivity of the church. . . . What do I care about the number and influence of those who are in this error? The truth is mightier than all of them."

As we have noted earlier, Luther was not indifferent to the special gifts and vocation of the Holy Spirit by which men were called to become heroes of religious faith; nor did he wish to quench that Spirit. His very defense of Spirit against structure obliged him to recognize that "certain works are wrought by the Spirit in a few men," but the same defense also forced him to warn that such works "must not be made an example or a mode of life for all." But because it was the Holy Spirit who worked such extraordinary and heroic deeds in the *Wundermänner* of God, the attempt to create an administrative structure of monastic rules and lifelong vows was, by definition, doomed to fail. For it was the paradox of Christian heroism that "no vow will ever become binding and valid until we have become spiritual, and no longer have any need of vows." Thus vows became possible only when they were no longer necessary. From this it followed as pastoral wisdom that it would be best "to keep such lofty modes of living free of vows, and leave them to the Spirit alone as they were of old, and never in any way change them into a mode of life which is perpetually binding." Since they were a matter of the spirit, indeed of the Holy Spirit, monastic vows should not be made a matter of the administrative structures and juridical authority of the church.

This still left, of course, those structures that had already been created by monastic vows and religious orders, the structures upon which, in fact, most of the church's ministry in the areas of education, missions, and mercy depended. In his treatment of those structures Luther felt able to "set forth publicly the counsel I have learned under the Spirit's guidance." He was "speaking now in behalf of the church's liberty and the glory of baptism." Therefore his evaluation of monastic vows was set into that context. His counsel was, quite simply and emphatically, "that all vows should be completely abolished and

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avoided, whether of religious orders, or about pilgrimages or about any works whatsoever, that we may remain in that which is supremely religious and most rich in works—the freedom of baptism.” Those who were in authority in the structures of the church should, therefore, “abolish all those vows and religious orders, or at least not . . . approve them.” Lacking so radical a decision by those in authority, Christians should “abstain from all vows, above all from the major and lifelong vows.” But if none of this counsel proved effective and the monastic vows and religious orders continued nevertheless, Luther was at least obliged to warn everyone against taking a vow or entering an order “unless he is forearmed with this knowledge and understands that the works of monks and priests, however holy and arduous they may be, do not differ one whit in the sight of God from the works of the rustic laborer in the field or the woman going about her household tasks, but that all works are measured before God by faith alone.” The proposal that voluntary monasticism wrought by the extraordinary operation of the Holy Spirit or an “intramundane asceticism” be substituted for the structures of the religious orders and their vows continued to play a role in Luther’s ethic, but it did not in fact produce any similar structures, voluntary or involuntary, within most of Protestantism.

## CHURCH LAW VERSUS DIVINE LAW

Supporting all the other structures of the church, deriving its authority from them but in turn providing them with its sanctions, was church law, which had, in one way or another, spoken on each of the issues discussed thus far. It was for Luther the supreme instance of the equation of Spirit and structure. On the sacramental system, for example, he knew that his exposition would “displease those who believe that the number and use of the sacraments are to be learned not from the sacred Scriptures, but from the Roman See.” The words of Christ to Peter in Matthew 16, 19 were taken as an authorization granting “the

pope the power to make laws," even though Christ was speaking of something altogether different from "taking the whole church captive and oppressing it with laws." It would not do, therefore, to "flaunt the authority of the church and the power of the pope in my face," for "these do not annul the words of God and the testimony of the truth." The identification of Spirit with structure had brought about an identification of church law with divine law, which meant that the supporters of the ecclesiastical institution "constantly exalt their own ordinances above the commands of God." They supposed that Christ had "left us the gospel so that the pontiffs might sound the voice of Christ," which they equated with "their own ordinances." The liberty of the sons of God had thus been exchanged for a new tyranny of laws, which, though enacted by men, were vested with the authority of the commandments of God; "and we serve in bondage instead of being free—we, to whom all days, places, persons, and all external things are one and the same." As a result, the church was under a tyranny more grim "than the synagogue or any other nation under heaven."

The solution was to draw a radical distinction between the commandments of God and "those that have been invented by men in the church." It did not matter even if "all the world holds and practices the contrary." For in opposition to all the laws and ordinances of the church, Luther was ready to cry out: "No law, whether of men or of angels, may rightfully be imposed upon Christians without their consent, for we are free of all laws." And again: "Neither pope nor bishop nor any other man has the right to impose a single syllable of law upon a Christian man; if he does, it is done in the spirit of tyranny." Although the Hussites had been condemned for their disobedience to the laws of the church, they "have the word and act of Christ on their side"; for what was being defended against them was a law ordained by "the tyrants of the churches, without the consent of the church, which is the people of God." Therefore not the Hussites but "you Romans" were the true heretics and schismatics, because they presumed "upon your figments alone against the clear Scriptures of God." Having

delivered himself of this complaint against the equation of the law of the church with the law of God, Luther warned "the pope and all his papists: Unless they will abolish their laws and ordinances, and restore to Christ's churches their liberty and have it taught among them, they are guilty of all the souls that perish under this miserable captivity, and the papacy is truly the kingdom of Babylon and the very Antichrist."

In a few places in *The Babylonian Captivity*, Luther's attack on canon law is sharpened to the point of an attack on the capacity of law as such, of any law, to accomplish its ends; in other places, however, he speaks as the defender of the principles of the law. The latter theme is sounded, for example, when, near the beginning of the treatise, Luther warns of the possible consequences of withholding the chalice from the laity: "If we permit one institution of Christ to be changed, we make all of his laws invalid, and any man may make bold to say that he is not bound by any other law or institution of Christ." But the former theme is the more striking, also because of its relation to what Luther taught about law generally. "No state," he says, "is governed successfully by means of laws. If the ruler is wise, he will govern better by a natural sense of justice than by laws. If he is not wise, he will foster nothing but evil by legislation, since he will not know what use to make of the laws nor how to adapt them to the case at hand." As an alternative Luther suggested that "if there is knowledge of the divine law combined with natural wisdom, then written laws will be entirely superfluous and harmful." "Above all," he concluded, "love needs no laws whatever." Applied to concrete moral and legal issues, this philosophy of law does not seem to have led to very specific conclusions. In the area of marriage and divorce, for example, Luther's observations on law and practice here in *The Babylonian Captivity* are quite inconclusive. It was consistent with the position just quoted when, contrasting divine law and church law, he asserted that "marriage itself, being a divine institution, is incomparably superior to any laws, so that marriage should not be annulled for the sake of the law, rather the laws should be broken for the sake of marriage." But he went on a little

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later to state a preference for bigamy over divorce, adding: "But whether it is allowable, I do not venture to decide." Nor would he permit the pope and bishops to decide; but "if two learned and good men agreed in the name of Christ and published their opinion in the spirit of Christ, I should prefer their judgment even to such councils as are assembled nowadays." Again it was the spirit of Christ that was to be preferred to the structure of canon law. Indeed, marriage legislation was the best possible illustration of the corruption introduced by canon law, "so that there is no hope of betterment unless we abolish at one stroke all the laws of all men, and having restored the gospel of liberty we follow it in judging and regulating all things. Amen."

Unfortunately, this "Amen" could not be the end of the matter. Each of the structures we have been reviewing here had been an integral element not only of the corporate life of Catholic Christendom, but, for that matter, of the personal and professional life of Martin Luther. And as the Reformation's summons to a renewal by the Spirit in preference to a renewal of structure developed further, both the vigor and the poignancy of this summons became evident. To each of these structures Luther's Reformation eventually had to address itself in specific situations and with specific recommendations; that is to say, it had to come to terms with the necessity either of renewing the given structures or of creating new structures, which would, of course, inevitably be in need of eventual renewal. And so the very outcome of the conflict between Spirit and structure in the Reformation has documented a principle which the churches of the Reformation have found it easier to address to Roman Catholicism than to apply to themselves, a principle in which the continuity of structure is affirmed but the demand for renewal by the Spirit is sounded: *Ecclesia semper reformanda*.

## 2.

# INSTITUTION VERSUS CHARISMATA

CHRISTOPHER BUTLER, O.S.B.

THE title "Catholic Church" is given, alike by its adherents and in common human parlance, to an identifiable and unique reality, existing in the midst of general and public human history. It is true today, as it was in the days of St. Cyril of Jerusalem and St. Ambrose, that when a man in the street is asked to direct someone to "the Catholic Church," he knows that he is being asked the whereabouts of the building in which members of the Roman Catholic communion worship. And everyone knows what the recent Council meant by "the Catholic Church" when it affirmed that the Church of Christ, constituted and organized in the world as a society, "subsists in the Catholic Church."

If one is asked to describe this identifiable reality, it is fairly easy to answer that it is a fellowship of human beings, made members of it by baptism, and that this fellowship is governed by a college of bishops at the head of which is the Pope, the bishop of Rome. It is a religious, not a civil, society; but it functions, in some aspects at least, in a tangible and visible way as political societies or states do. It has codes of law, and its governing body—or alternatively the executive central authority centered in the pope—has recognizable and changing policies which bring it sometimes into collaboration, sometimes into opposition, with the policies of political states or groups of states.

In other words, the Catholic Church is an institution. It is

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"an organization for the promotion of a public object." This object is the propagation and maintenance of the form of religion which the Church claims it has received in trust from God through Christ.

It is also true that the Church is a mystery. This truth, never denied but somewhat neglected in preconciliar theology and practice, has been emphasized by Vatican II. *Lumen gentium*, instead of setting out with a precise definition of the Church, begins with a consideration of various biblical images of her, images which cannot readily be synthesized into a conceptual unity; which in fact tend to overlap one another, just as the parables of the kingdom of God overlap one another and are not easily synthesized. It is as though the Council invited us, through the interplay of such images, to attain to an insight, a preconceptual "vision" of the Church, before trying, however inadequately, to grasp and comprehend this insight in concepts and propositions of a quasi-scientific character. The task of an ecumenical council, in fact, is not to do the work of systematic theology, but rather to expound, sometimes to define, the faith which provides theology with its data.

Among the data on the Church which Vatican II thus offers theology is a certain transcendence which extends the Church's presence in the world beyond the visible limits of the Catholic institution. All salvation, all grace, comes to man from Christ; and outside the Church, established by Christ and sacramentally re-presenting him, there is no salvation. Yet the Council encourages us to admit the existence of grace beyond the limits of the complete Catholic communion, and moreover beyond the limits of any explicit Christian allegiance. It further acknowledges that non-Catholic Christian churches and ecclesial communities have a positive salvific role in the actual situation of mankind at the present day. There was thus good reason for the choice of the term "subsists in," rather than "is," in the passage cited above where the Church is identified with the Catholic communion. This transcendence of the Church beyond the visible limits of the Catholic communion should be borne in mind in all that follows in this discussion.

The Council, however, gives no support to any notion that the Church has such a wide and indefinable extension that she is bereft of a determinate and divinely guaranteed structure. The institutional aspect of the Church is not a merely contingent outcome of the gospel but was part of her original idea. As divine charity was really incarnate in Christ, and as his human nature was a body-and-soul unity, so that same charity was to continue among men in a sacramental re-presentation, embodied in a quite concrete, body-and-soul reality, the holy community of the old covenant purified and elevated through the advent of the Messiah to a new and universal level. Like all actual communities the holy community has a structure. The Council has set forth the original structure of the Church, built up on the sacraments of baptism, holy orders, and the Eucharist, and taking shape in the primitive Christian community under the leadership of the apostolic college with Peter at its head. This structure was, in its essence, not an invention of the early Church, but a creation of Christ himself, foreshadowed in his choice of the twelve and in particular of Peter. It is therefore something indispensable, and has, by divine assistance, survived to the present day and will survive till the second Advent. The apostolic college lives on in the episcopal college, as the Petrine primacy lives on in that of Peter's successor in the see of Rome.

This structure is very simple in its essence, and very plastic. The Council did not even affirm that episcopacy *as we know it* is the only possible development of this embryonic structure; it is content to affirm that it is the one actual, and therefore legitimate, development of the apostolic college. Again, the presbyteral and diaconal ministries, though linked with Christ's institution and validated through their immediate link with the episcopate and with the fullness of the sacrament of orders received by the bishops, are not actually affirmed to have been immediately instituted by Christ in their historical form. They could be understood as instituted by implication in the institution of the plenitude of the sacrament of orders which bishops, as successor of the apostolic college, receive, and by which their own college is constituted.

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The importance of this sacramental view of the Church as institution is great. It did not win the day in the Council without difficulty. In particular, it required a struggle to secure recognition of the fact that the teaching and governing functions of bishops are not derived to them by canonical delegation from the pope but are inherent in their sacramental consecration, along with the function of sanctifying the people of God.

At one point, it would seem, the Council has left us with an unanswered question: How does the papal primacy stand with regard to the otherwise complete incorporation of the hierarchy within the sacramental system? The sacrament of orders is intrinsically orientated to the constitution of the apostolic-episcopal college, and the successor of Peter is essential to this college as its visible head. But is there a further aspect of the papal primacy which falls outside of, transcends, this collegial structure? The *Nota praevia*, which was never approved by a formal vote of the Council but was offered to it by the Doctrinal Commission as an interpretation of *Lumen Gentium* before that document was finally approved, speaks of a distinction between the Roman pontiff by himself (*seorsum*) and the Roman pontiff together with the bishops. Does this mean that the Pope has powers inherent in him which do not in themselves belong to his position within the episcopal college?

For modern Western canon law the Pope has been the fount of all ecclesiastical law, and a modern, pre-conciliar, canonist even maintained that the authority of an ecumenical council derives from the Pope who convenes it. This would seem to put the Pope in a lonely eminence and might suggest a strong theological interpretation of the word “*seorsum*” in the *Nota praevia*. The whole Church, including the episcopal college, would stand on one side, the Pope on the other; the Pope, in one aspect of his office, would be not in but only over the Church.

However, the *Nota praevia* itself, explaining the teaching that the episcopal college only acts in a strictly collegial way “with the consent of its head,” says that “this phrase is used so that there may be no idea of a *dependence* as though on someone

*extraneous* (to the college). The term ‘consent’ on the contrary, suggests a *communion* between Head and members, and implies the need of an *act* which is the proper competence of the Head.” Commenting on this, we may say that the Church is a mystery of communion, and just as the college is within the total communion, so also is the Pope in all his functions and attributes. In other words, I should argue that there is no aspect of the papacy which falls outside the collegial structure of the Church; and that even when the Pope acts “by himself” (*seorsum*) he is still acting as head and mouthpiece of the episcopal-apostolic college. If this is so, the sacrament of orders is the divinely established source of the whole institutional structure of the Church.

Now it is a fully established theological truth that the sacraments are valid *ex opere operato*; that their ministers are but ministers, not agents, of the sacraments. It is Christ who is the agent in the sacraments; Christ and the Holy Spirit, working through stable collective means which are independent of the personal holiness of the ministers. Seen thus, the sacramental system is the static element in the life of the Church, as it were the supernatural skeleton of the mystical body. The Church is a sacramental institution, and all other aspects of its institutional life are subordinate to the sacramental aspect.

The Church, however, is not only static; she is dynamic. Vatican II never denied that the Church is what theologians call a *societas perfecta*. But it was most emphatic that she is a pilgrim people, “growing slowly and straining towards the consummation of the kingdom” of God and Christ, and “hoping with all her strength to be united in glory with her King” (*Lumen gentium*, art. 5). She is thus a living entity on the move. Although her gospel endowment has been complete since the end of the apostolic age, she is perpetually growing, and her life partakes not only of an abiding identity but of a perpetual novelty and originality. She is as it were animated by the Holy Spirit, and the life he imparts to her has a perpetual freshness and an ever-changing relevance to the ever-changing human scene in which it is set and to the redemption of which it is

directed. As Newman put it: "In a higher world it is otherwise, but here below to live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often" (*Development of Doctrine*, p. 40). In a remarkable conciliar speech it was pointed out that there is one thing we cannot do about the Church: we cannot predict her future evolution.

By what channel does this element of change enter into the life of the Church, to balance the element of stability deriving from the objective and unchanging aspect of the sacraments? The principal conciliar text on this subject runs as follows: "It is not only through the sacraments and Church ministries that the same Holy Spirit sanctifies and leads the people of God and enriches it with virtues. Allotting his gifts 'to everyone according as he will' (1 Cor. 12, 11), he distributes special graces among the faithful of every rank. By these gifts he makes them fit and ready to undertake the various tasks or offices advantageous for the renewal and upbuilding of the Church, according to the words of the Apostle: 'The manifestation of the Spirit is given to everyone for profit' (1 Cor. 12, 7). These charismatic gifts, whether they be the most outstanding or the more simple and widely diffused, are to be received with thanksgiving and consolation, for they are exceedingly suitable and useful for the needs of the Church. Still, extraordinary gifts are not to be rashly sought after, nor are the fruits of apostolic labor to be presumptuously expected from them. In any case, judgment as to their genuineness and proper use belongs to those who preside over the Church, and to whose special competence it belongs not indeed to extinguish the Spirit, but to test all things and hold fast to that which is good (cf. 1 Thess. 5, 12, 19-21)" (*Lumen gentium*, art. 12).

The conciliar debate on this paragraph showed that it required some explanation. It could be taken as speaking primarily of abnormal religious phenomena of the kind that is sometimes today associated with Pentecostalism. It speaks in fact of charisms, and the classical biblical discussion of charismata occurs in 1 Corinthians, to which it refers. In 1 Corinthians mention is made of charisms of healing, operations of miracles,

prophecy, the discernment of spirits, kinds of tongues (what modern scholars call glossolaly), and interpretation of tongues. Was a Catholic council in the twentieth century giving its special blessing to this kind of phenomena? And are such phenomena so common in the Church today as to need this favored treatment in a conciliar text? They seem, it is true to have been characteristic of some parts or phases of the life of the primitive Church, and to have been regarded as evidence that she was indeed living in the power of the Holy Spirit. But it would be difficult to maintain that they have retained a high status in subsequent ages on the whole, though a certain type of hagiography has made only too much of so-called mystical phenomena, not to speak of dubious miracles, in the lives of the saints.

However, our extract from 1 Corinthians was deliberately selective. St. Paul mentions other charisms also: the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, faith, helps, and governments. And he implies a hierarchy of charisms: "set your hearts upon the greater charisms," and then proceeds to the great hymn of charity (ch. 13), which he exalts not only above all charisms but above faith and hope also.

Behind this Pauline teaching there lies the general conviction of the early Church that the Messianic age, inaugurated by the death and resurrection of Christ, was the age of the Holy Spirit, given to and active in the refashioned people of God. Acts represents St. Peter, on the first Christian Pentecost, citing the prophet Joel: "This is what was said by the prophet Joel: And in the last days, says God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters will prophesy; and your young men will see visions and your old men will dream dreams. . . . Jesus," Peter goes on, "exalted to the right hand of God, has received from his Father the promised Holy Spirit, and has made this effusion which you see and hear" (2, 16-33). That the Church is the organ through which the Holy Spirit energizes in human history has remained the Church's abiding, though sometimes rather quiescent, conviction.

What is almost as striking in the New Testament as the extraordinary phenomena of the early Church's charismatic life

is the moral and theological development of this conviction by St. Paul, to the point at which he sees the action of the Holy Spirit in the normal prayer-life of the individual Christian, and charity as the typical evidence of the Church's inspiration. This means that we have to look for evidence of the gifts of the Spirit in the Church not so much in extraordinary mystical or thaumaturgical phenomena as in the so-to-say congenital fruits of sanctifying grace and the theological virtues. In their various ways, the great missionaries, great social workers, the great Fathers and Doctors of the Church, and her great theologians, have been charismatic persons.

But it is important to remember that there is no hard-and-fast line between these great, and in some cases extraordinary, charismatics and the body of the faithful. The visibly great manifestations of the Spirit grow out of a general soil of Christian prayer and charity. A Thérèse de Lisieux cannot be explained except in the context of the Carmelite tradition, carried on by generations of usually obscure nuns, most of whom would have been, in the eyes of an observer, mediocre devout persons. What does a Curé d'Ars owe to his parents and family? How much did Newman gratefully owe to similar influences, to schoolmasters, writers of books now never read, and Oxford friends whose names would be lost to history had they not had a share in molding and stimulating the mind of one of the greatest and holiest Christian thinkers and leaders? It is further useful to bear in mind that among those who make up the people of God there are many, quite unknown to us, who lived and live more purely and fervently by the gift of the Holy Spirit than some who have been raised to the altars of the Church. Only God knows the full catalogue of the saints, and he is continually adding to it.

The paragraph of *Lumen gentium* which we have been considering illustrates a feature of Vatican II: the way in which, in its teaching, separate treatises of the modern theological cursus are made to throw light on one another. Teaching on the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and on the fruits of it in the life of the faithful, has tended to get hidden away in treatises on

ascetical and mystical theology—as though the Holy Spirit were held in copyright by monks and nuns. The Council has brought this teaching out into the light of day and used it to illuminate and enlarge our understanding of the mystery of the whole people of God.

I have said that the life of the Church has an unquenchable originality. It is from the indwelling and operation of the Holy Spirit in the faithful that this originality flows. May I quote from the little-known teaching of one of the greatest Catholic spiritual writers, the obscure eighteenth-century Jesuit, Jean-Pierre de Caussade, first observing that for the Old Testament names in his list one could substitute Christians of varying periods and classes. His theme in this passage is the divine action, that is to say the operation of the Holy Spirit, in the Church: "It began with the creation of the world; and right up to the present moment, it is making new experiments. It sets no bounds to its operations and its fecundity is unexhaustible. It did one thing yesterday, and does something else today. The same activity expresses itself at every moment by ever-new effects, and so will it be forever. It produced an Abel, a Noah, an Abraham, each on a different plan. Isaac, in his turn, was an original creation; Jacob is no copy of Isaac, nor Joseph of Jacob. There was none like Moses among his forefathers. David and the prophets are of a style different from the patriarchs'. St. John the Baptist surpasses them all. Jesus Christ is the First-begotten. The apostles act rather under the impulse of his spirit than by imitation of his acts. (To return to Jesus Christ) he did not confine himself by rules; he was far from following his own maxims literally. The Spirit of God was always the inspiration of his holy soul. This soul had ever been surrendered to the breath of the Spirit, hence it had no need to examine a past moment in order to give shape to a present action. The breathing of grace fashioned all his moments, on the pattern of the eternal verities which the holy Trinity kept stored up in invisible and impenetrable wisdom. The soul of Jesus Christ receives its orders moment by moment, and carries them out into act. . . . And this same Jesus, still alive and still operative, lives

still in holy souls and accomplishes new things in them" (*Abandon à la Providence Divine*, p. 92).

Theologians will at once recognize that behind this teaching lies the classical thesis of the treatise on grace. Grace is the created principle of the life of the baptized believer, and therefore of the life of the pilgrim Church, the fellowship of the faithful. But created grace itself is the effect and impress of the uncreated grace, the Holy Spirit personally indwelling the believer and acting on, in, and through him as his subject and instrument. As *Lumen gentium* says, Christ "has imparted his Spirit to us; this Spirit, existing as one and the same in head and members" of the mystical body, "vivifies, unifies, and moves the whole body. This He does in such a way that His work could be compared by the Holy Fathers with the function which the soul fulfils in the human body, whose principle of life it is" (art. 7).

It has been said that the Council witnessed a confrontation between two different ways of thinking: the essentialist and the existentialist. It is when we view the Church, not as a static entity of the school-room, a sort of *corpus mortuum* on the table of the theological anatomist, but as a historical reality, living and moving in, giving to and receiving from, the total human ambience—*incessu patuit dea*—that we come to see that the abstract teaching of the textbooks on grace has to be translated into the vivid concrete terms of actual Christian life in the Church, *tam antiqua et semper nova*, of that life as it is lived not only in presbyteries and convents but in the rough and tumble of human affairs. Then we understand why the Council devoted a chapter of *Lumen gentium* and a whole separate decree to the laity and to its task of establishing the kingdom of Christ in the whole of human history.

It is time to relate, however briefly and insufficiently, the two aspects of the Church with which we have been dealing: the institutional and the charismatic.

First, then, it is important to note that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are given according to God's good pleasure to whom he will. He is in this matter no respecter of persons; and while he

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undoubtedly offers to those who hold office in the Church the graces appropriate to their state, he often chooses for the most copious outflow of his graces those who are of no official significance in her. Grace is a pure gift of God. The only hindrance to its advent, exercise, and growth is some moral deficiency in the proposed recipient. And we know, almost too well, that office and moral goodness are not always in a relationship of direct proportion to each other.

While, however, the full implications of this freedom of God in the distribution of his graces has to be fully recognized, we have also to bear steadily in mind that Church authority, ultimately the episcopal-apostolic college and its head, has the task and duty of watching over the Church's charismatic life. The gifts of the Holy Spirit to the Church include, in fact, not only those which are usually termed charismatic (and of which we have been speaking under this title), but gifts of office also. As the Council says: "Among these gifts" of the Holy Spirit "stands out the grace given to the apostles. To their authority the Spirit himself subjected even those who were endowed with charisms" (*Lumen gentium*, art. 7). It is indeed, in the passage quoted earlier, of *extraordinary* gifts that the Council observes that "judgment concerning their genuineness and orderly exercise pertains to those who preside in the Church." But I think the statement can be generalized—provided always that it be remembered that the exercise of control can err by excess as well as by defect. As the Council further remarks, with a reference to 1 Thessalonians, "It is of the special competence of those who preside in the Church, not to quench the Spirit, but to test all things and hold fast by that which is good" (*Lumen gentium*, art. 12).

It used to be the practice of Catholic writers on theological subjects to insert in their prefaces a recognition of this right and duty of authority, in the exercise of which the magisterium speaks in the name of the Church and as giving expression of the Church's general mind. An admittedly exceptional instance of this will be found in the advertisement to the first edition of Newman's *Development of Doctrine*: "It is scarcely necessary

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to add that he (that is, Newman himself) now submits every part of the book to the judgment of the Church, with whose doctrine, on the subjects of which he treats, he wishes all his thoughts to be coincident."

A more pertinent example of traditional Catholic teaching and feeling on this matter may be the consistent teaching of the greatest masters of spirituality that even supernatural visions, voices, and commands of whose genuineness the recipient can develop no interior doubt, are not to be turned to any practical effect without the approbation of authority, represented, for instance, by the confessor or some accredited theologian.

The reason for such control is to be found, in part, in the verdict of human experience that "no man is a good judge in his own cause." Leaving aside the inspiration of the biblical writers and of others in the age of revelation itself, no man—in the ordinary way—can be certain of his own inspiration, or at least of the true interpretation and lawful practical applications of his inspiration. In his uncertainty, the Christian will naturally look to the Church for guidance and decision. But there is a further reason. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are the source of the dynamic vitality of the Church. Such vitality can easily, one might even say, tends of itself to, become a centrifugal force, carrying the faithful, individually or in groups, off in diverse directions, and even threatening the Church's visible unity. The hierarchy exists to be the organ and guardian of that unity. "The Roman pontiff," says Vatican II, "as the successor of St. Peter, is the perpetual and visible principle and foundation of the unity both of the bishops and of the faithful at large. Individual bishops are the visible principle and foundation of unity in their own churches" (*Lumen gentium*, art. 23). We may compare with this the teaching of Vatican I: "In order that the episcopate might be one and undivided, and that through the mutual cohesion of the bishops the multitude of believers as a whole might be preserved in unity of faith and fellowship," Christ established in Peter the Petrine primacy (Denz. 3051).

It would hardly be too much to say that Vatican II's teaching

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on the charismatic life of the Church is a long overdue restoration of a truth which has suffered from lack of official emphasis, as well as through an excessive use of the controlling power of ecclesiastical authority. And already, it may be thought, the life of the post-conciliar Church has begun, in a host of speculative and practical initiatives, to bear witness to the timeliness of this teaching. Perhaps, as one who lived through the Council and rejoiced at its work, I may be allowed to say here that there are phenomena in the life of the Church at the present moment which make me anxious to recall to the hearts of all of us that charismatic life is self-destructive in the long run, unless the divinely established rights of magisterial control are honestly recognized and loyally obeyed. Authority itself is sometimes blamed today as being too permissive. I welcome, on the whole, the more liberal attitude, and the willingness shown by authority to give full play to dialogue within the Church. But I feel a twinge of anxiety lest the abuse of a new-found liberty may provoke an excessive reaction of control; in which case, between the devil of licence and the deep sea of authoritarianism, we might find ourselves once more in trouble reminiscent of the first decades of this century.

### 3.

## UNITY IN DIVERSITY

ARCHBISHOP GEORGE HAKIM

WITHIN the basically unified history of the people of God from Old Testament times, a diversity has been found which pre-figures the Christ, the Church, and the mysteries in their fullness, as has often been brought out in clear perspective. The patriarchs: Adam, Abel, Noah, Abraham, Melchisedech, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and the others are but partial figures, each representing but one of the prophetic aspects of the total redemptive function which is to be brought into reality someday, very much like the multicolored rays of the solar spectrum must blend to make sparkling white light. In a similar way paradise, the tree of life, the arc of Noah, the Red Sea, Mount Sinai, the manna in the desert, the water of the rock, the temple, and the holy of holies are limited types which signify holy things seen in their totality in the light of the New Testament and to be realized in eschatology, where their basic unity will become apparent.

This limitation of being able to signify only partial qualities of the totality of the mystery in the Old Testament should find its counterpart, after the accomplishment of the redemptive work, in the pluralism or the diversity of the various Churches with the added note of unity among them made real by Christ, whose tunic of one piece was left intact by the soldiers as a fitting symbol of this oneness. Fathers of the Church such as St. Ireneus, St. Clement of Alexandria, St. Maximus the Confessor,

St. Augustine, and St. Gregory the Great have emphasized the riches which flow from unity in diversity. We all know the famous text of St. Augustine concerning the verse of Psalm 44 in which the robe of the daughter of the king appears "*circumdata varietate.*" St. Augustine sees in this verse a symbol of the diversity of the Churches.<sup>1</sup> The twelve tribes of Israel indicate most clearly the pluralism which was to be reproduced within the fundamental element of the Church, namely, the apostolic quality of being "twelve," the principle of that collegiality which was almost forgotten in the past and within the framework of which Vatican II has so happily set forth the diversity of the Church.

However, unity in its most rigorous and precise sense was made manifest in Christ himself at the moment of his death. Abandoned by his disciples, he gave witness to voluntary solitude by vaunting the power which he held—but did not use—of being protected by more than twelve legions of angels (Mt. 26, 53). A chant in the Byzantine office for holy week brings out nicely this concept in these words: "By stretching forth your hands to the unjust who were arresting you, O Lord, you were saying to them: Although you smite the Shepherd and disperse my *twelve* sheep, the apostles, I could make more than *twelve* legions of angels appear."<sup>2</sup>

The legions did not appear while he was on the cross. Christ remained alone in the unity of the God-man at the very moment of his sacrifice and he felt himself abandoned even by the Father, for it was necessary "that one should die for all" (Jn. 12, 14). A troparion from the Byzantine liturgy for the same week sings the words: "You shall all be dispersed after having abandoned me. But I shall still bring you together, that you may announce me, the friend of men, the *philanthropos*."<sup>3</sup> For once Christ has died and risen again, pluralism takes up its function, and the process of reuniting begins. Jesus will depart

<sup>1</sup> *Epistola ad Casulanum*, 14

<sup>2</sup> "Stichère de l'Idiomèle de Prime au vendredi saint," Mercenier, *La Prière des Eglises de rite byzantin*, II, 2<sup>o</sup>P., p. 196.

<sup>3</sup> "V<sup>o</sup> ode de l'office des Saintes Souffrantes," *ibid.*, p. 185.

to return one day, but he leaves the twelve to continue his work. Nothing indicates so clearly the distinction between unity and diversity within the Church as the Lord's emptying himself in solitude and suffering alone in his redemptive act at the moment of sacrifice and, on the other hand, the prophetic preparation for the drama of salvation in which so many men and things took part, or in its continuation in the mysteries of the Church. Christ is one, and he communicates his unity to his Church through his disciples to whom he sends his Spirit. But at the same time he "pluralizes." For immediately after the redemptive drama, he shows himself to the apostles, brings them together, but sends them to all the peoples of the entire earth. "You will be my witnesses in all of Judea and Samaria and even to the ends of the earth" (Lk. 24, 47). Basic unity will be henceforth that of giving witness: "You will be *my* witnesses." Witnesses of his death and resurrection—but "to the ends of the earth," like a multibranched tree, the principle of diversity.

Before Pentecost, upon the initiative of Peter, the head of the apostolic college, Matthias is elected as a twelfth to replace Judas, in order to continue the pluralism which is to be found again at the end of time, when the twelve tribes are to be judged by the twelve thrones (Mt. 19, 28). And each of the twelve are to represent in the present, just as in prophetic times, a certain mystic reality of the Church. The number "twelve" will be temporarily eclipsed. There was to be a surplus, an "extra one"—*more* than twelve legions—who would be joined because of the unexpected recruiting of Paul, whom the twelve had to receive as sent by the Spirit, but whose presence, at times disturbing, would place a heavy burden upon the tender apostolic growth. Finally, shall he not be called Paul, the Apostle? And, taken from his name, the book of the epistles read at the Byzantine liturgy, is also called Apostle. But in fact, he was added to the twelve, an "extra one," a reinforcement of pluralism.

In the first part of this essay, I would like to make a few observations of historical and theological order to show that pluralism does exist and that it is well-founded in fact. Then,

in a second part, I would like to point out how the East, in so far as it differs from the West, can bring useful elements to that *aggiornamento* so desired by the Council. In other words, I would like to point out the ecumenical role of the East.

## HISTORY AND THEOLOGY

1. It is from Antioch that the disciples left for their extensive evangelization. We can immediately verify the conquest of the Greek world of the time: Paul in Cilicia, Antioch, Cyprus, Asia Minor, Macedonia, Thessalonica, Athens, Corinth, and finally in Rome; Peter perhaps in Cappadocia and then in Rome; John at Ephesus; Mark in Alexandria. But there were several of whom there is scarcely any reference made in the early Christian documents and who made their way from Antioch towards the East, into those regions of the Persian empire where the Syriac language, closely related to the Aramean, offered better possibilities for contact and where many Jewish communities maintained themselves since the exile. And so there were two different Christian worlds in the making: Syrian Christianity, which took on so many Semitic elements, and Greek Christianity, in a more Westernized culture. And in the latter, with the two great rival metropolitan centers of Alexandria and Antioch, which would soon have their principles of differentiation, Greek Christianity would undergo independent evolutions; and all this without considering that, taken to Rome, the third metropolitan center, Christianity would take on other contours very rapidly, even before the Latinization of this Church.

Furthermore, alongside the Greek and Syriac, the Christian message was received very early by other minds, represented by other languages: in upper Egypt, Coptic and then, somewhat later, Ethiopian; Latin in Africa, in Rome, and in Western Europe; Armenian between the Euphrates and the Caucasus. And that many languages made up that many Churches. This phenomenon, which had nothing in itself to do with any dog-

matic divisions, would be seen multiplied with the centuries. Today, after the period of uniformity which the Catholic Church has experienced for several centuries, pluralism has become one of the major problems, and in order to resolve it there is an appeal made to the venerable experience of the East, to its diversity and pluralism.

a. I would like to point out first of all, that in all the regions mentioned above, the Christian assemblies brought their first and essential features of the sacramental discipline—baptism, the Eucharist above all, and the hierarchy—from which, together with prayer and the use of the sacred Scriptures, there arose *different liturgies*, and according to the case, these were a result of a greater or lesser number of elements from Judaism, but primarily founded upon apostolic preaching. These liturgies, which arose in this manner and which would soon develop, marked the Christians of each region profoundly with slight variations and differences. The Christians would soon cling to these differences as if they were of apostolic tradition. These liturgies give witness to the principle of diversity in unity resulting from the sending of the twelve—"You will be *my* witnesses"—these liturgies give witness to Christ.

b. Onto these variations upon a common element of cult, there comes to be added that of the calendar and the date of Easter. There has been a tendency to impose uniformity coming from certain regions, especially from Rome, opposed by the Fathers of the Church in Asia who maintain the principle of liberty, based upon respect for an apostolic tradition. The Church of Ephesus was celebrating Easter according to the Jewish way of determining the Pasch, namely, the fourteenth of Nisan, no matter on what day of the week it fell. Polycrate of Ephesus asserts this ancient Johannine tradition to the Bishop of Rome, Victor, in the year 190. Victor wanted to impose a contrary usage, which was undoubtedly more widespread, under the pain of excommunicating the Ephesians. Victor saw himself reproved by St. Ireneus of Lyon, of Asian origin himself, who defended the legitimacy of two different customs having the

right to exist since they are longstanding and have not been contested. The opinion of St. Ireneus triumphed.<sup>4</sup>

This question is of some interest today, since there still exists a difference in calendars, although for different reasons, and because this very year, for the first time after the Vatican Council and the ecumenical movement, there has been some agreement between the Catholic and Orthodox Churches—at least in Egypt and Turkey, in favor of the Orthodox date for Easter, which this year fell one month after the date on which Easter was celebrated by the Western Church. We find here a voluntary return to a pluralism concerning Easter, although we know that the question of a uniform date for Easter is a problem for all Churches and even for many nations, because of the unification of the world. The *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* does make an allusion to this.

On the other hand, liturgical pluralism was to coincide with political pluralism with an ethnic basis and was to follow its general trends. The non-Roman Orient, situated beyond the confines of the empire, in the Persia of the Sassanides, or to the South of the coast of Egypt and of the Nile Delta, would never enter into the current of Hellenization which unified Syrian or Egyptian areas, which were nearer and more indebted to the Greek world. The Churches of these countries will remain anti-Greek and anti-imperial and will keep themselves closed to foreign influence down to our own day. This did not, of course, hinder the perfectly human tendency towards centralization from having its effect within these Churches. One of the strongest drives towards centralization was that which took place within the Syro-Chaldean Church and which, beginning with Nestorianism, spread to Mongolia and the very remotest depths of Asia. It was one of the greatest Christianities in history. Before the invasion of Tamerlane in the twelfth century, the Venetian explorer Marco Polo noted the striking resemblance, from the point of view of centralization, between this Church so different from ours, and the Roman Church as it

<sup>4</sup> See E. Lanne, *Les différences compatibles avec l'Unité dans la tradition de l'Eglise ancienne*, found in *Istina*, 1961–62, p. 230.

was known in his time. "The Nestorians," he writes, "have a patriarch whom they call *catholicos*, and who makes bishops and all prelates and sends them to all parts of India, and Cathay [Northern China], just as our apostolic of Rome."<sup>5</sup> He merely gave witness to the permanence of what the Fathers of this Church, meeting at the Council of Seleucia-Ctesiphon in the year 424, wanted to enact since they considered their patriarch or *catholicos* as enjoying complete jurisdiction "in virtue of the primacy which he had over all bishops, just as Peter had the primacy over the other apostles."<sup>6</sup>

Byzantine centralization would also dominate, but with much more flexibility, since it was founded above all on the faith of the councils and the gradual extension of the rite of Byzantium. It developed in all the Churches flowing within the political influence of the emperors and later in the Slavic and the Balkan worlds. The independent Churches soon came to stop this process by the consolidation that took place within them. I have said that the centralizing process was "somewhat more flexible." It should be realized that when Byzantium developed into a great Church and, as a second Rome, into the first see of the East, it had to reckon with two metropolitan centers which were of greater antiquity, namely, Alexandria and Antioch, and even with a third see established by Constantine, namely, Jerusalem. With these three it had to harmonize a pluralistic regime. There had always existed in the East, even the Byzantine East, several great Churches. This was in fact the principle followed by the independent Orthodox Churches which were to appear, and the Churches which issued from Byzantium have always followed this course of development, the legitimacy of which cannot be contested. There resulted from this some rather special spiritual and cultural qualities, even if only by reason of the language adopted by the liturgy in each of the regions under Byzantine influence and hegemony, or by reason of having the deposit of faith implanted in the

<sup>5</sup> See H. Marot, *Un exemple de centralisation ecclésiastique: l'Eglise chaldéenne*, found in Irenikon, 1955, p. 185.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 178.

genius of a new ethnic group. And so, alongside the Greek, such languages as Slavonic, Georgian, Arabic, Rumanian, and others became established. In fact, one can rightly speak of a "Russian Christianity" as one can speak, up to a certain point, of the other aforementioned forms. And all this within the Byzantine world which had been for such a long time called "Orthodoxy."

Because of the factors we have enumerated, the Churches of the East have had to maintain themselves and to develop following a diversity of liturgies and institutions, and as we will see presently, also of theology. We should note, however, that in their diversity, the Syrians, as we have seen, appealed to the memory of the apostle Peter as head of the apostolic college and referred to him as to a type. At Byzantium, on the other hand, there would be the claim of being a second Rome. A certain desire for the unification of the regional hierarchies under the same head always gains ground where the Churches take on greater proportions. But this could easily take place without causing any substantial harm to the unity of faith and communion.

The Roman Church, which held a principle of unity based upon the Scriptures, namely, the primacy of Peter, seems to have been rather opposed to the principle of pluralism, at least with regard to the Churches which had been founded by her directly—as we would say in the East, founded by the "patriarchate of Rome." It is true that Rome is the only patriarchate of apostolic origin that the West had ever had, and this fact of being unique must have contributed to the absence of the type of pluralism noted in the East. We have already cited the case of Pope Victor, who wanted to intervene in the Churches of Asia, but was not able to do so. But within the Western system, the Roman practices were to prevail in all respects. The Western system comprised generally what Pope Innocent I designated in 416 as the Churches missionarized by Rome, the "see of Peter," namely, Italy, all of Gaul, Africa, and Sicily. Pope Siricius had already enunciated a principle similar to this one some twenty years before; and one would have to await St.

Gregory the Great, at the end of the sixth century, who had lived in Constantinople and knew the customs of the Greeks, and who would allow Augustine of Canterbury, whom he sent to England, a bit of latitude. But with the deterioration of the relations between East and West, the very important sense of diversity tended to disappear.

On the other hand, the Council in Trullo marks in 692 in Constantinople the desire on the part of the Eastern Church to oppose the customs of the Latins, and from this time on, the feelings of tension only became more intense, so that slight differences between Churches came slowly to be interpreted as a sign of disagreement rather than a "manifestation of unity," as the Augustinian formula cited above would have wanted it to be. The broadening of the horizon due to Vatican II gives us an insight into different perspectives today, and this is certainly a sign of the times. Pluralism, while leaving the primacy of Peter intact, is highly recognized as a value within the Church. And this is rather new in the light of the affirmations of dogma.

2a. Now we will get down to *theology*. If, before the Council of Nicea in 325, one could not properly speak of "differing theologies" among the Churches united by the same faith, by the fourth century, there was to be a divergence of opinions concerning Trinitarian doctrine to be found among the doctors of the Church whose orthodoxy cannot be doubted. The term "consubstantial," introduced at Nicea by a Latin named Ossius of Cordoba in order to resolve the questions being debated, was far from respecting the nuances demanded by Greek theology. St. Basil later lamented the fact that "his brothers from the West do not even possess the terminology indispensable to express clearly the properties of the divine persons."<sup>7</sup> The Greek theology of divine processions was always difficult for Latins to assimilate. When St. Augustine engaged the resources of his genius to rethink this problem, he also created a new line of thought which was comprehensible to

<sup>7</sup> *Epistola ad Terentium*, 4.

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those who followed him in the West, but never satisfied the Greeks, and does not satisfy them to this day.

b. The same problem was to arise with regard to the theology of the Holy Spirit. Beginning with the Council of Constantinople in 381, this theology marks the sacramentality of the Church in the East to the degree that the epicletic prayers, the epiclesis, were introduced into everything. The Westerners, who at the time were unacquainted with the quarrel with those who opposed the divinity of the Holy Spirit and were not even present at the Council, never really came to experience it. This difference, strongly felt and accentuated today, became manifest again with regard to Vatican II, when the Orthodox had noted on several occasions that the Fathers of the Council had often forgotten the Holy Spirit.

c. The same is true in Christology. But here the dissension sprang up in the fifth century among the anti-Greek Syrians and above all between the anti-Chalcedon groups and the theologians of Ephesus and Chalcedon. Consequent to the Councils held in these two cities in 431 and 451, schisms developed. But we know that the historians of dogma in our own times have pondered over this question very carefully and have been able to study it dispassionately. They have arrived at the fact that disagreements over terminology, fired by the politics of the day, were at the root of it all. These findings are very much like those made in the fourth century by the more perceptive of the Church Fathers concerning the Trinitarian controversies, although they were not understood at the time. St. Hilary of Poitiers, one of the rare—and perhaps only—Westerners to well understand the East and its doctrines, set out to demonstrate that the differences between strict orthodoxy and the homoousians of Basil of Ancyra were not based upon an insurmountable obstacle and that one could really redeem what was acceptable in these formulas. After all, St. Athanasius had done this very thing somewhat earlier in his *De Synodis*, since, as he said concerning his adversaries, he wanted to “discuss as a brother with brothers who think as we do, and differ only concerning a word.”

St. Basil would do the same with the controversy concerning the Holy Spirit. And many disputes, even those which accompanied the problem brought up at the Council of Florence concerning the *Filioque*, could have been contained, if this same attitude had prevailed, instead of a spirit of contention inflamed by hard feelings. There is no doubt that when the question will be taken up again, dispassionately, in a true dialogue or at a round table discussion, it will be considered quite differently than it had been in times past.

*Conclusion:* As Vatican II has so aptly stated in the *Decree on Ecumenism*, "What has already been said about legitimate variety in matters of cult we are pleased to apply to differences in theological expressions of doctrine. In the investigation of revealed truth, East and West have used different methods and approaches in understanding and proclaiming divine things. It is hardly surprising, then, if sometimes one tradition has come nearer than the other to an apt appreciation of certain aspects of a revealed mystery, or has expressed them in a clearer manner. As a result, these various theological formulations are often to be considered complementary rather than conflicting."<sup>8</sup> This note of being complementary is one of the most important themes of the theological renewal of Vatican II. It harkens back to what I have said at the beginning of this address with regard to the figures of the Old Testament who, like the rays of the solar spectrum are to compose brilliant white light. We arrive at only a partial understanding of the truth at a given time, and we have to work at it together in order to grasp it. In this is also found a great resource of diversity within the Church. I could also mention here, but I will abstain from doing so in order not to prolong this first part of the address, the differences between our two churches concerning the eucharistic bread (leavened or unleavened), marriage or celibacy of the clergy which is so much under discussion today, the value of monasticism, various practices concerning fasting which would be of some importance, and

<sup>8</sup> Article 17.

I will go on to the second part of my paper: The positive contribution of the East to the West in the *aggiornamento* of the Church, or if you prefer, its contribution to ecumenism, in those questions which seem to me to be the most fundamental.

## THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE EAST TO CONTEMPORARY ECUMENISM

The *Decree on Ecumenism* which I have cited "gives thanks to God that many Eastern sons of the Catholic Church preserve this heritage and wish to express it more faithfully and completely in their lives and are already living in full communion with those who follow the tradition of the West." I would like to take advantage of my position of Eastern bishop, who belongs to the continuous succession of the suffragans of the ancient see of Antioch of the Greek-Melkite Church, but united to the apostolic see of Rome, in order to bring out in a few points which are so relevant today how much, as the Council puts it: "the spiritual, liturgical, disciplinary, and theological patrimony of the East in its various traditions is fully a part of the catholicity and apostolicity of the Church," and can contribute so bountifully to the renewal in the post-conciliar era.

1. It is well known how, many times in the Council, the institution of *episcopal conferences* was put in connection with the ancient patriarchates. I must pay my respects here to my Patriarch, Maximos IV, whose place I take today, and whose courageous and lively interventions, prepared by many previous publications, have shed light on the patriarchal concept within the Church, and its importance for dialogue with the Orthodox. In article 23 of the *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, these ancient patriarchal churches are called the *matrices fidei*: they have given birth to other churches as to daughters, with which "they are connected down to our own time by a close bond of charity in their sacramental life and in their mutual respect

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for rights and duties.”<sup>9</sup> The text of the Council continues: “This variety of local churches with one common aspiration is particularly splendid evidence of the catholicity of the undivided Church. In like manner the episcopal bodies of today are in a position to render a manifold and fruitful assistance, so that this collegiate sense may be put into practical application.” Here is found a great change taking place in the Church, a change which, together with new cultural centers which are arising through the accession of modern languages into the liturgies of different countries, will in time make the churches of the West resemble somewhat those of the East from the point of view of diversity. This perspective is all the more startling in that it is applied to the Western Church which, as I have said above, has experienced only one patriarchate, that of Rome, but whose extraordinary development in these last centuries does call for a decentralization. Without doubt, the monarchical principle will remain to a certain degree, because it is part of the very structure of the Western Church, but the system of different patriarchates, whether of ancient or recent origin, can bring in the benefits of their experience. This is one of the points where the *aggiornamento* will be able to take place by taking its inspiration from Oriental traditions and from their development throughout the course of history.<sup>10</sup> and where diversity will bring forth much fruit.

The first episcopal synod to be held after Vatican II is approaching, and much faith is put into it to get things moving. It seems, however, that it will be the episcopal conferences that will be able above all to set into motion the work of the Catholic Church on all continents, since they will have an organic function proper to each region. The movement is already in progress and all we can do is to hope for its successful development. But, even though it is bound with a theology, it is still to a large extent of canonical and institutional character.

It seems that there is much more to be expected from the

<sup>9</sup> *Lumen gentium*, article 23.

<sup>10</sup> See E. Lanne, *Le Synode dans l'Eglise Orthodoxe d'Orient*, found in IDO-C du 29, 1, 67 (Doss. 67-3).

Christian culture of the East for the well-being of the Church of the West, as the Council has suggested in the pages cited above.

I would like to point out as a proof nothing more than the considerable contribution made by the Orthodox Church to the ecumenical movement in general, and then to the World Council of Churches in Geneva. It appears to be more and more important since, in his first address, the secretary general of the World Council of Churches, Dr. Eugene Carson Blake, declared that this Council had to "de-Westernize" itself more and more. In fact, this Council would have to turn itself towards the profound and complementary qualities of Eastern Christianity in order to assimilate them, especially because of the growing membership of the Orthodox Churches in the Council and the importance they are taking within it. The former secretary general of the Council, Dr. Visser 't Hooft had already praised the doctrine of Eastern theologians in 1947 in the Stone Lectures at Princeton, where he said: "Thanks to them, European theology was put into contact with this great current of thought which had preserved the eschatological vision of the primitive Church, and this without having been touched by the process of diminution or of secularization which is so much a part of the history of Western Europe. Their vast theological systems were received with much reserve and criticism, but they contributed greatly toward enlarging the horizons of European theology and toward bringing it back to the universal Gospel of the primitive Church. The Orthodox Church prays in its Easter Liturgy: 'All of creation celebrates the Resurrection of Christ, upon which it is founded.' It is through this notion of the cosmic scope of the victory of Christ that the Orthodox will contribute the most toward the enrichment of Western theology." This observation must be retained as absolutely fundamental.

We find ourselves at perhaps the most important point of history, in which pluralism of Christian cultures will be able to play its role, when all Christians are seeking to come together, and when all have to expect mutual aid within God's providence. The observation of Dr. Visser 't Hooft concerning the

process of secularization peculiar to Western Europe and, it must be added, to all that followed upon it during the period of colonization, was presented as a deficiency. In this same world today there are those who would seem to want a secularized vision of ecumenism as a sort of liberation, as if the contribution of religious thought represented the "age of myth," which is outmoded and surpassed today. During these partial and progressive steps in secularization, the West had been able to defend apologetically the position of the faith against the radicalism of its opponents by putting itself onto the level of reason and nature. Since the East never had to struggle against the same perils, it has not experienced this mixture of the religious and the rational, and if unbelief has almost touched it as it does today in the atheism of the countries of the East, the faith has remained untouched where it remains in force, and it does not compromise. If it diminishes in the number of believers, it nevertheless maintains its purity. The same was true in the Near East during the invasions of the preceding centuries. The yielding that one finds in the sudden turns of Western thought, at a time when everything invites it to dialogue, should find its corrective counterpart in this other part of Christianity, the Eastern world, which has preserved the apostolic witness and the sacramental life in a manner which is more compact and homogeneous.

It is necessary to come closer together. Pluralism today is becoming more of a dualism. This is the time to recall the words of the Siracide: "all things come in pairs; one thing underlines the excellence of the other."<sup>11</sup> Western and Eastern Christianity must sustain each other.

Without doubt I am in agreement with the recognizable fact that the East must be helped by the West. And it is helping the East this very day by that product of Western culture—let us say, of Christian Western culture—which is a certain technique that has mastered everything and has reached the most distant groups within Christianity, be it only by the numerical system

<sup>11</sup> Eccl. 42, 24–25.

of its calendar: so many years after Christ. It will also be able to help by the organization which the Roman Church gives to other churches, and by the breadth of view of its scholars. On the other hand, this impetus towards the modern world encouraged by the Council in the constitution *Gaudium et spes* must not be rooted out of the context of the Council itself. Not to understand this would be to be unfaithful to the Council.

The accent placed on the paschal mystery in the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, as well as the accent placed on the people of God and its march throughout history as stated in the Constitution *Lumen gentium*, and the emphasis in chapter 7 on the "eschatological character of the Church in progress and in union with the Church Triumphant" invites us to assimilate as much as possible all that Oriental theology has elaborated in this direction. And this is one of the greatest accomplishments of Oriental theology. In reaction against a concept of the Church which is too abstract and too apologetic, and has been propagated among Western Christians in certain great syntheses of a rather static character, since the time of Bellarmine and even before, there has been substituted at the Council a concept of the Church and its life which one could call "existential," which was that held by the early Fathers, especially the Eastern Fathers. The wish expressed by Paul VI to establish at Jerusalem, consequent to his pilgrimage to the Holy Land, an "Institute of Salvation History" is an added indication that this need is strongly felt.

On this point the close relationship has often been noted<sup>12</sup> between the presentation of salvation history and the triumph of the victory of Christ, as one likes to consider it today, and the *anaphora*, or canon, of St. Basil, which is said in the eucharistic liturgy on certain great feasts in our rite. This *anaphora*, which the Byzantine liturgy considers to be its purest gem, can serve everybody today either as a framework for thought or as a remedy.

<sup>12</sup> E. Lanne, *L'Histoire du salut dans la liturgie byzantine*, found in Oikonomia, Heilsgeschichte als Thema der Theologie (*Mélanges O. Cullmann*, 1967, pp. 140ff.)

I have chosen this *anaphora* as a theme, because one finds the preparation for it and echoes of it, in more or less developed form, in the liturgies of other Oriental churches, whether Egyptian, Coptic, Syrian, Armenian, or others, and because it is the exquisite type of the religious resonance of the spirit of the East in the presence of the mysteries of Christianity. Under this title it truly summarizes the best of what the East can offer the West, which is seeking today, in the ecumenical dialogue to reform its liturgy and its catechesis to harmonize them with the other churches in what they have preserved of the best. Let us indicate immediately that in all the regions where the ancient liturgies have manifested this spirit, there would come about, in varying degrees and in spite of differences, a very sacred and marked element—borrowed above all from the rites and consecration of the Old Testament and given new life in the New—which element would underline the institutions issued from the Gospel and above all from the sacramental life of the churches. The rites of initiation, the eucharistic prayer very notably and the various consecrations, as the consecrations of places of worship,<sup>18</sup> would intensify their tendency in this direction. The pluralistic riches of the early Church extended themselves thus under the sign of the sacred, which has particularly marked the Byzantine Church, but which has affected us all. The cultural life that would follow would profoundly mark the Christians of each region with this sign and they would cling to it as if it were of quasi-apostolic origin. It seems to me that this point should be brought out especially at this time, when the sacral element of Christianity, which was as present in the West as in the East for the first fifteen centuries, seems to be considered by many (even though the Council insisted upon it so strongly in its *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*) as something belonging to another time and era. Let us not allow ourselves to be overly impressed by the slogans of succeeding modes of what was called reason, enlightenment, progress, and so forth, and is called by other titles today and will be given

<sup>18</sup> H. Punet, *Dédicaces des Eglises*, found in the DACL, IV, 397.

still other names tomorrow, by those whom St. Paul reproached for allowing their ears to be tickled by novelty.<sup>14</sup> We know that the unfailing faith of the Church gained the upper hand each time, and that it will always be so. There is a profound existence of the sacred which belongs to Christ himself and comes from him, the Anointed One par excellence. We will never be able to exhaust it, and the East, which has experienced it so strongly, will never depart from it in any manner. If the East must learn from the West to become a bit more immanent after the manner in which the yeast must be present in the dough in order for it to rise, and also must learn to temper certain excesses of credulity (and under this heading the East has something to receive), then on the other hand the transcendence of Christianity, the transcendence of Christ who took his eternally present sacrifice into heaven, remains the great wealth of the East which it should today, more than ever before, recall to the world in its concrete way of life. In this is found its *sursum corda*, its call, its vocation, its *anaphora*. Let us see how the text of St. Basil which I have chosen will have us understand this, by referring precisely to salvation history, at the very moment of the eucharistic celebration.

"It is truly fitting and proper to praise You," says the text, for "after having fashioned man, and having honored him with Your image, You have placed him in Paradise . . . but as he disobeyed you, You have ejected him from our world, and have sent him back to the earth from which he came, but at the same time arranging for him salvation by rebirth in Your Christ. . . . You have sent prophets . . . You have performed miracles through Your saints . . . to announce the salvation to come . . . ; You have given us the Law . . . ; You have sent angels to protect us. When the fullness of time had come, You have spoken to us through Your own Son, through whom You have created the ages. . . . He took flesh of the Holy Virgin. He emptied Himself by taking on the form of a slave, by taking on in His body our lowliness in order to make us conformable to the image of His glory. . . . Having come into this world, He led

<sup>14</sup> 2 Tim. 4, 3.

us to a knowledge of You, true God and Father, after having redeemed us for Himself, a numerous people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation. After having purified us in the water and sanctified us in the Holy Spirit, He gave Himself over to that death that held sway over us, sold into sin. Having descended through the Cross into Hell in order to accomplish all things by Himself, He destroyed the terrors of death. Having risen on the third day . . . , He became the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep, the first born from the dead. . . . Having ascended into Heaven, He is seated at the right hand of Your Grandeur, in the highest of the Heavens, from where He will return to render to every man according to his deeds. He has also left us this memorial of His saving Passion . . . , for as He prepared to go to His voluntary, eternally memorable and life-giving death on the night when He gave Himself for the life of the world, having taken bread He said . . ." (here follow the words of consecration over the bread and wine), and then follow the words: "Do this in memory of Me, for each time that you eat of this bread and drink of this cup, you will announce My death and you will confess My resurrection."

During the course of the recitation, which lasts about twenty minutes because of its sumptuous character due to formulas which are almost entirely scriptural, and which I have abbreviated considerably, we have a summary of all salvation history of which the eucharistic sacrifice is a sacramental résumé, the "memorial of His saving Passion," as is said (*upomnemata tou soteriou autou pathous*). And so it is upon the existence of a fact—namely, the redemptive incarnation of the Word of God—that all Christian religion is founded, its entire message, the whole transformation which it brought to the world and which culminates in the resurrection of the Lord. To express this in abstract formulas is to misrepresent it completely. The great victory of Christ is to have conquered death, which is the consequence of the sin of man, and to have made us eternally alive if we want to profit from his victory. And this took place through the sacrifice of Christ, which sacrifice was taken up by him into heaven, and we ascend there temporarily with him at the moment of the *anaphora*. Our life consists in awaiting his re-

turn, in nourishing ourselves with the Eucharist until he returns, and we live on this earth and in this world where our role of disciples is to make him known in all ways, by radiating his teachings by our example, always having our attention fixed up above so that our hope does not weaken. Such is the profound meaning of the Basilian *anaphora*. The liturgical year is centered around Easter, which is a yearly repetition of salvation history (just as in the East, the Sunday liturgy is considered a weekly repetition of it), and invites us to live this mystery intensely. In order to make this vision complete, we would have to set it off by all that the Byzantine iconography has created for the life of worship in those churches where everything which was just said is also written in frescoes on the walls, for the catechesis and edification of the faithful.

The close connection between this *anaphora* and certain Jewish prayers has been brought to light. Recall the great prayer of Solomon at the time of the dedication of the temple,<sup>15</sup> in which he implored the help of God for all the needs of the people (epiclesis), and recall how this prayer was answered, and you will immediately see what the Old Testament had that was prophetic for Christian prayer, and how the temple of Solomon and our Christian churches are situated in the same perspective. What I have said concerning the sacred character of salvation history, partially preserved in the Oriental liturgies, can be advantageously brought to light with regard to the relations which are beginning to develop and will have to continue between Christianity and Judaism in the era inaugurated by the Council.

"From all times," wrote a Catholic who is a specialist in these matters, "the Jews have considered the liturgy or the actions of the public and official cult as the supreme form of the presence, the representation and the evidencing of events, whether past, present, or future. This stands out in the light of the most evocative, the most dramatic of narrations, that of the night of the Exodus or the liturgy of the Pasch. Such events have certainly been accomplished by God and in favor of His people, but in the liturgical celebrations, through such a given historical

<sup>15</sup> 2 Chron. 6 and 7.

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fact, the Jews celebrate the honor, the glory, the omnipotence of God, of a sovereign God, 'actor' in history on behalf of all humanity."<sup>16</sup>

We are certainly far from any form of secularism. We are also far from any confusion between the sacred of Christianity with what one so freely calls today the age of Constantine, which is reprehensible only insofar as it was able to project the sacredness of religion onto the things of this world in a manner that was disadvantageous to the sacred itself.

The allusion which I have just made to the Jewish world should also be completed by another reference to non-Christian religions, for whom a special secretariat was created as a part of the post-conciliar era. It is certainly not through secularization that an approach will be made here. A few months ago the newspapers have spoken a lot about an inter-denominational meeting that took place at Mont-St.-Michel, in France, and where not only Christians of different churches have met to pray together, but where there were also Jews and Moslems present. The invocation of the great Mufti was sensational and carried off the prize, so to speak, because the prayer which he addressed to Allah struck the listeners so deeply by its religious character and the surprise of hearing a man in this century so believing in God and his angels.

The post-conciliar era has created a secretariat for non-believers. But I doubt that its action will be truly efficacious as long as we are divided and as long as the two parts of our Christianity, East and West, will not be able each to bring its complementary vision, the East bringing into bold relief the aspect which I have just spoken about.

#### GENERAL CONCLUSION

The words of Christ, "That they may be one that the world believe" (Jn. 17, 21) are applied, in the long run, better than to anyone when they are applied to those non-Christians about whom there is so much preoccupation today. Everyone knows

<sup>16</sup> T. Federici, *Israel vivant*, 1965, p. 22.

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how the fighting which sometimes takes place around the holy sepulcher between divided Christians, at the time of the great feast days, leaves a painful and deceiving impression on the Moslems (and now the Jews) who are charged with the duties of policing the holy places. Let us not think that non-believers can be better impressed by our divisions or even our diversity, if the overriding unity of our Christianity, which wants so much to become adaptable to all races, is not capable of animating them with the same spirit.

This is what seemed to me to be the most opportune of what should be said at this theological Congress on the subject of the diversity of the churches compared with the fundamental unity that should prevail among Christians. Unity and diversity are gifts of God from which we should all profit. But it seems to me that there is a relationship of cause and effect between them: diversity should contribute to that unity towards which we all tend, and which will be given us if we respect the multiple values which the apostles, in their pluralism, have left in our churches in founding them, but expecting these churches to live in communion with one another.

## 4.

# PRAYER, LITURGY, AND RENEWAL

ALEXANDER SCHMEMANN

## 1.

READING the enormous and ever-growing renewal literature of our time, one cannot help coming to the conclusion that its main, if not exclusive, theme of reference is *the world*. To make Christianity relevant to the world, aware of its coming of age, responsive to its needs, problems, and anxieties, adequate to its thought forms—such is the basic content and the orientation of the idea of renewal, whether we follow it on the level of theology (where its aim has been formulated as “recasting traditional Christian doctrine in the light of modern man’s new self-understanding”), of apostolate, and even of spirituality. Whatever the difference between the various concrete programs of renewal (and they range from a radical rethinking of nearly everything in traditional Christianity, including the concept of God, to a moderate adjustment to the needs of our time), the consensus, the common denominator, and the working principle here is not only a new and acute sensitivity to the world, but its acceptance as virtually the only criterion of the Church’s faith, life, and action. If in the past the world was evaluated by Christians in terms of the Church, today the opposite is true: to many Christians, it is the world that must validate the Church. And even if one does not accept the idea of secularization as it is understood by some radical theologians, it is this term that is probably

coupled more often than any other with the term "renewal."

My purpose in this paper is to question, not the new awareness of the world in Christian consciousness, but that which, to me at least, appears as a dangerous one-sidedness in that awareness. I have no doubts about the urgent need for the Church to remember that she exists not for herself but for the world and its salvation. I am not sure, however, that all aspects of this necessary renewal in Church-world relationship have been given equal attention. I even wonder whether one really begins at the beginning. Speaking of liturgy and prayer, I am not trying simply to add a touch of piety to an otherwise healthy process but to raise what I am convinced is the fundamental question of all renewal. This paper is written by an Eastern Orthodox, and, therefore, in a perspective which may differ from that of the Christian West. It is hoped, however, that here as elsewhere, the Orthodox point of view may contribute to the clarification of the basic issues.

## 2.

The first question is: What is the *world* which is spoken of so much today? It is strange, indeed, that in our present preoccupation with the world we seem to ignore the fundamental antinomy traditionally implied in the Christian usage of that term. We seem to forget that in the New Testament and in the whole Christian tradition the world is the object of two apparently contradicting attitudes: an emphatic acceptance, a *yes*, but also an equally emphatic rejection, a *no*. "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son . . . God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him" (Jn. 3, 16-17) and then—"Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in him" (Jn. 2, 15). Texts like these could be multiplied *ad libitum*, and rooted in them is the whole history of the Church with its polarization between the affirmation of and the care for a "Christian world," and its rejection and

negation for the sake of "one thing needed." The question is, therefore, whether this polarization gives us a simple choice, that is, whether it permits us to opt for one of the two positions, the *yes* or the *no*, at the exclusion of the other. Such a reduction is always tempting. If in the past a certain tradition considered every opening towards the world a sign of betrayal and apostasy, today we hear voices denouncing any withdrawal from the world (monasticism, contemplation, even liturgy) as irrelevant and harmful, and calling us to a kind of unconditional surrender to the world and its values. But the whole point precisely is that the New Testament and the Christian tradition allow no choice and no reduction. They accept and reject the world simultaneously, they present the *yes* and the *no* as one, and not two, positions and it is this paradox that of necessity constitutes the starting point of all Christian approach to the world and thus to all renewal.

But is there really a paradox? Have we not forgotten that the ultimate term of reference in Christianity is not the world but the kingdom of God, and that the two apparently contradictory attitudes towards the world are reconciled theologically and existentially when we refer their object—the world—to the central Christian notion of the kingdom of God? The *yes* and the *no* appear then as two aspects, both essential and necessary, of one and the same attitude. For, on the one hand, the world created by God and made *good* by him is revealed to us as the "matter" of the kingdom of God, called to be fulfilled and transfigured so that ultimately God may be "all in all things." As such, the world is *accepted* as a gift of God, as the object of man's love and care, for it belongs to man, the king of creation, the representative of God in the cosmos, to fulfill the world. Thus the world is the "sacrament of the kingdom"; it is oriented towards the kingdom, and for this reason dualism and Manichaeism have consistently been condemned by the Church as heresy. Yet, on the other hand, the same world, once it becomes—again through man—self-sufficient and self-centered, an end in itself and not in God, once it rejects its ontological subordination to the kingdom of God, or in other words, its transcendent vocation

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and destiny, is revealed as not only the enemy of God but as a demonic and meaningless realm of self-destruction and death—"the lust of the flesh and the lust of eyes and the pride of life . . ." (1 Jn. 2, 16). And thus the acceptance of the true world as the "passage into the kingdom," implies as its very condition the negation and rejection of that which in the New Testament is called "this world" and the love of which is the sin par excellence and the source of all sin.

All this, of course, is commonplace. Unless, however, one returns to that commonplace, one cannot overcome the incredible confusion in which we find ourselves today and which, in spite of the best intentions, deprives the world—be it modern, technological, "come-of-age" or anything else—of any clear *Christian* meaning, so that although we are called to sacrifice for the sake of the world all that we cherish, we still do not know for the sake of *what* it itself exists and what is its ultimate destiny.

It is here, however, that we encounter our major difficulty. To refer the world to the kingdom of God and to look for the meaning of our action in the world in the light of the kingdom is tantamount to asking: What is the kingdom of God? Are we not trying to find the meaning of one unknown simply by replacing it with another unknown? If the notion of the world is to be clarified by that of the kingdom, how is the kingdom to be comprehended and accepted as the *ultima ratio* of all our thought and action, the moving power of our renewal. "Thy kingdom come . . .": Since the foundation of the Church there has been no day, indeed no hour, when this prayer had not been repeated thousands of times. But has its meaning remained clear and identical to itself throughout all that time? Are we still praying for the same reality? Or, more simply, for what are we praying? These questions are not rhetorical. To anyone who has eyes to see and ears to hear, it must be obvious that in the course of history something strange happened to the central concept of the "kingdom of God"; little by little it simply lost its central position and ceased to be the ultimate term of reference. It was Dom Gregory Dix, I think, who put his finger on

this development when—with some exaggeration—he spoke of the “collapse” of the early Christian eschatology. Is it not an accident indeed that the treatises *De Novissimis* are among the vaguest and the least developed in Christian dogmatics and that eschatology achieved a bad reputation by taking refuge in all kinds of apocalyptic sects? Whatever the reasons for all this (and we cannot analyze them here) the fact remains that the idea, or let us say, the *experience* of the kingdom of God, so overwhelmingly central in the early Church, was progressively replaced by a doctrine of the “last things,” of “another world”—centered almost entirely on the salvation of individual souls. But this, in turn, led to a shift and also a “split” in Christian piety. There were, on the one hand, those who for the sake of the soul and its salvation not only rejected but also ignored the world, refused to see in it anything but the lust of the flesh; and, on the other hand, there were those who for the sake of the world began to ignore more and more, if not to reject, the “other world.” The crisis of Christianity, I am convinced, is not that it has become irrelevant to the world—for in a way it always remains “scandal to the Jews and foolishness to the Greeks”—but that the kingdom of God, as value of all values, the object of its faith, hope and love, the content of its prayer: “Thy kingdom come!” has become irrelevant to Christians themselves. And thus, before one can speak of any renewal, one must return to *the* question: What is the kingdom of God, and where and how does one experience it so that it may be the power of our preaching and action?

## 3.

To this question the early Church, at least, had an answer: to her the kingdom of God was revealed and made known every time she gathered on the eighth day—the day of the *Kyrios*—“to eat and drink at Christ’s table in his kingdom” (Lk. 22, 29–30), to proclaim his death and confess his resurrection, to immerse herself in the new eon of the Spirit. One can say that the

uniqueness, the radical novelty of the new Christian *leitourgia* was here, in this entrance into the kingdom which for this world is still to come, but of which the Church is truly the sacrament: the beginning, the anticipation, and the parousia. And the liturgy, especially the Eucharist, was precisely the *passage* of the Church from this world into heaven, the act by which and in which she fulfilled herself becoming that which she is: entrance, ascension, communion. But—and this is the most important point—it was precisely this eschatological, that is, this kingdom-centered and kingdom-oriented character of the liturgy that made it (in the experience and the understanding of the early Church) the source of the Church's evaluation of the world, the root and the motivation of her mission to the world. It is because Christians—in their passage and ascension to heaven—knew the kingdom and partook of its “joy and peace in the Holy Spirit” that they could truly be its witness in and to the world.

In my opinion, one of the greatest tragedies of Church history, a tragedy not mentioned in manuals, is that this eschatological character of the Christian *leitourgia* was little by little obscured in both theology and piety which squeezed it into categories alien to its primitive spirit. It is here indeed that one must look for the major cause of the process mentioned above: the progressive weakening of the idea of the kingdom of God, its replacement with an individualistic and exclusively futuristic doctrine of the last things. In the history of post-patristic theology, nothing I am sure was more one-sided and simply deficient than its treatment of sacraments and liturgy in general, of the Eucharist in particular. And the deficiency lay precisely in a double dissociation: of the liturgy from ecclesiology, and of the liturgy from eschatology. First from ecclesiology, that is, the doctrine and the experience of the Church. Within the purely rational and juridical categories of the theology, which at first developed in the West but later had a deep impact in the East also, liturgy ceased to be understood and presented as the means of the Church's fulfillment, as the *locus Ecclesiae* par-

excellence. The sacraments now came to be seen as means of grace, as acts performed in and by the Church, to be sure, but aimed at individual sanctification rather than the edification and the fulfillment of the Church. But this also and of necessity meant their disconnection from eschatology. The initial understanding and experience of the liturgy as passage from the old into the new, from *this world* into the *world to come*, as procession and ascension to the Kingdom, was obscured and replaced by its understanding in terms of a cult (public *and* private) whose main aim is to satisfy our religious needs. The *leitourgia* —a corporate procession and passage of the Church towards her fulfillment, the sacrament of the kingdom of God—was thus reduced to cultic dimensions and categories among which those of obligation, efficiency, and validity acquired a central, if not exclusive, position. Finally, to this orientation of sacramental and liturgical theology there corresponded an equally non-ecclesiological and non-eschatological orientation of liturgical piety. If the liturgy remained very much the heart and the center of the Church's life, if in some ways it became its almost unique expression, it was no longer comprehended as the act which existentially refers us to the three inseparable realities of the Christian faith: the world, the Church, the kingdom.

## 4.

I can now make my chief point which is very simple and which will, no doubt, appear naïve to many a sophisticated ideologue of renewal. If the latter is to have a consistent orientation, and this means precisely a theology, this theology must be rooted, first of all, in the recovered Christian eschatology. For eschatology is not what people have come to think of it: an escape from the world. On the contrary, it is the very source and foundation of the Christian doctrine of the world and of the Church's action in the world. By referring the world, every moment of its time, every ounce of its matter, and all human thought, energy, and

creativity to the eschaton, to the ultimate reality of the kingdom of God, it gives them their only real meaning, their proper entelechy. Thus, it makes possible Christian action as well as the judgment and evaluation of that action. Yet the locus of that recovery is the liturgy of the Church. For eschatology is not a doctrine, an intellectual construction, a chapter (*De Novissimis*) simply added and juxtaposed to other chapters of dogmatics, but a dimension of all faith and of all theology, a spirit which permeates and inspires from inside the whole thought and life of the Church. And the proper function of the Christian *leitourgia*, as I tried to show, is precisely to generate that spirit, to reveal and to communicate that eschaton without which the Church is but an institution among other human institutions, an institution, however, with strange and indeed irrelevant claims, and the Christian faith a helpless, if not ridiculous, attempt to force the elusive respect on the part of Pascal's *savants et philosophes*.

At this point one may ask: But is this possible? Have you not admitted yourself that the eschatological power of the liturgy has been obscured and, for all practical reasons, lost in the course of history? Can we simply return to an experience which seems to have been the particular grace of the Church's childhood? To these questions two answers can be given:

In the first place, no changes in theological interpretation or in liturgical piety could altogether alter the nature of Christian liturgy and its original inspiration. We would have not been able to speak about the real spirit of the liturgy and no liturgical renewal would have been possible if there did not exist a self-evident discrepancy between certain theological thought forms and a certain liturgical piety, on the one hand, and the liturgy itself as it was preserved in spite of all developments and metamorphoses, on the other hand. The unique and truly exciting meaning of the liturgical movement as it began and developed during the last fifty years lies precisely in its breaking the theological and pietistic superstructure to the genuine spirit of the liturgy. As one of the pioneers of the movement wrote: "I

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have been a priest for several years and I did not know the meaning of Pascha." Pascha was there all the time, but it was impossible to experience its existential meaning within the framework of a theology alienated from Pascha. The most important aspect of the movement, however, is that this rediscovery of Pascha was not a simple return to the past, not archeology and antiquity, but the spring of a truly new vision of the Church and of her mission in the world. The whole record of the liturgical movement bears witness to this fact. What is true of Pascha is true, in fact, of the whole liturgical tradition of the Church. I mention Pascha, however, because it is precisely this paschal dimension and root of the liturgy, its fundamental nature as passage and passover, that constitutes the most valuable achievement of the liturgical movement. Whatever aspect of Christian worship we study today—the liturgy of initiation, the Eucharist, or the liturgy of time—we discover more and more that the basic shape or *ordo* of each of them, the principle which permits the understanding of both their origin and their development, lies in their nature as acts of passage, as mysteries of the kingdom of God. Thus, the liturgical renewal *is* possible and it makes possible a renewal of the theology of the world as source and condition of a new vision of the Church-world relationship. Let me stress once more that it is not a mere interest in liturgy, its forms and spirit, that I have here in mind, but in liturgy as the source of a new vision and experience of the Church and of the relation to the world. As I have written elsewhere: ". . . the *lex orandi* must be recovered as *lex credendi*. The rediscovery of the Eucharist (and I will add here—of the whole liturgy) as the sacrament of the Church is, in other words, the rediscovery of the Church *in actu*, the Church as the Sacrament of Christ, of His "parousia"—the *coming* and *presence* of the Kingdom which is *to come* . . . It means that in the life of the Church, the Eucharist is the *moment of truth* which makes it possible to see the real 'objects' of theology: God, man, and the world."\*

\* "Eucharist and Theology," in *St. Vladimir's Seminary Quarterly*, Vol. 5, No. 4 (1961), p. 22.

## 5.

My second answer brings me to another reality mentioned in the title of this paper and of which I have not yet spoken, namely, prayer. It will not be disputed that prayer is to the individual Christian what the liturgy is to the Church *in corpore*, and that there is no Christian life without prayer. What needs to be stressed, however, is that Christian prayer, just like the Christian *leitourgia*, and for the same reasons, is in its essence eschatological; it is an effort towards and an experience of the kingdom of God. If by "prayer" we mean here not only an external rule and practice, but, above all, a total inner orientation of man towards God, and such is, of course, the content of the entire world of Christian spirituality, there can be no doubt that its object and experience is precisely the "peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" which according to St. Paul, is the very essence of the kingdom of God. When St. Seraphim of Sarov, one of the last and great Orthodox saints and teachers of spirituality, defines Christian life as the "acquisition of the Holy Spirit," he merely sums up a tremendously rich spiritual tradition which transcends the category of historical development, the division between East and West, the accidents of theological fashions, for it is one consistent, unchanging, and radiant testimony of the reality of the kingdom of God, of its transcendent immanence and immanent transcendence.

But is it not strange that in the present discussions of renewal so little place is given to this testimony or, more exactly, that its inescapable relation to the very idea of renewal seems so often to be ignored? Is it not the result again of a particular theological deformation, of another dissociation, this time of theology and spirituality? Is it not clear that the same theology which, in its triumphant intellectualism ignored liturgy as the *locus theologicus* par excellence, had to ignore *ipso facto* spirituality? The latter was thus isolated in a particular compartment, that of mysticism, and ruled out as a source of theology. What we discover today, however, is that theology,

when reduced completely to a self-sufficient rational structure, becomes, in fact, defenseless before secular philosophies and finishes by accepting them as its own criterion and foundation. It literally cuts itself off from its sources, from that reality which alone makes words about God *theoprepeis*, or, adequate to God. At this point, renewal risks to become surrender.

My point here is thus again a simple one. There can be no renewal in any area of Church life or, simply, of the Church herself, without first a *spiritual renewal*. But this emphatically is *not* a mere pietistic statement, a call for more prayer. It means, above everything else, the overcoming of the tragical divorce between the *thought* of the Church and the *experience* of the Kingdom of God which is the only source, guide, and fulfillment of that thought, and the only ultimate motivation of all Christian action. At the risk of shocking many a Christian, one can say that the Church as *institution*, as *doctrine*, and as *action* has no ultimate meaning in itself. For all these point beyond themselves to a reality which they represent and describe and seek, which is fulfilled, however, only in the new life, in the *koinônia* of the Holy Spirit.

And this experience is not to be “rediscovered” in books and at the conferences. It has always been, it is still *here* in the midst of us, independent of the fluctuations of theology and those of collective piety. It is indeed the only *real* continuity of the Church, the one that must be stressed above everything else in our age obsessed with history. Just as the liturgy, in spite of all reinterpretation and all reductions, has remained that which it has always been: the passage of the Church from the *status viae* to the *status patriae*, and as such the source of all real life of the Church, prayer: the thirst and hunger of man for the living God and a living encounter with Him, is that which kept that life alive.

In themselves, liturgy and prayer are not renewal for they are above and beyond the category of renewal. But if, as we all feel and believe today, we need a renewal, then we must rediscover them as its source and condition.

## 5.

# WORSHIP

GODFREY DIEKMANN, O.S.B.

MUCH has been written, since the close of Vatican Council II, of the reasons why the schema on the liturgy was given priority over other schemata, and of what influence the conciliar discussions on this schema and the promulgation of the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* had on conciliar thinking and on the formulation of subsequent conciliar documents. We mention here only a few of the areas in which this document pioneered in opening, or reopening, avenues of theological and pastoral thought: the restoration of the laity to an essential role in the total work of the Church; the emphasis on the dignity of responsible personhood; the bishop as high priest of his flock, who by celebrating the Eucharist makes present the paschal mysteries of Christ's death and resurrection; the importance of the local worshiping community as the pre-eminent manifestation of the Church; the centrality of the liturgy, and more especially of the Eucharist, which is "the summit towards which the activity of the Church is directed, and at the same time the fount from which all her power flows" (art. 10); the real presence of Christ, not only in the eucharistic species, but also in the worshiping assembly, in the administration of the sacraments, and in the proclamation of the scriptural word; the restoration of sacred scripture to its rightful and traditional function, paralleling the eucharistic bread as primary source of our spiritual life; the new understanding of theology in terms

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of salvation history, and the consequent impetus to what is generally called biblical theology; the stress on responsive personal faith in the process of sanctification by means of the sacraments; the descriptive definition of sacraments as signs of faith, and the consistent effort, as a consequence, of securing truthfulness or sincerity, as well as contemporary meaningfulness of the sacramental rites.

All these basic concerns of the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* are obviously of high significance, both for the liturgical renewal itself and for the renewal of the Church, for which the liturgical renewal is fundamental. And all of these important principles are being implemented, with varying degrees of success, in the liturgical reforms that have been undertaken by the Consilium and the Congregation of Sacred Rites since the Council. But there is another basic theme of liturgical and church reform, clearly stated in the Constitution, though certainly not as yet forthrightly exploited or effectively put into practice in matters liturgical—a principle which in the long run may well prove of significance equal to or perhaps even greater than those just cited. I refer to articles 37–40, entitled “Norms for Adapting the Liturgy to the Culture and Tradition of Peoples.”

The revolutionary character of these four articles can scarcely be exaggerated, more especially by contrast with the rigid and centralized uniformity that had been cherished as an ideal ever since Trent. It seems likely that the full impact of these articles has not yet been generally felt because we have, up to now, adverted too exclusively to the universally recognized need of adaptation in mission lands. But article 38 declares that “provisions shall also be made, when revising the liturgical books, for legitimate variations and adaptations to different *groups*, regions and peoples, especially (that is to say, not exclusively) in mission lands, provided that the substantial unity of the Roman rite is preserved.” Nor are such adaptations limited to “the administration of the sacraments, the sacramentals, processions, liturgical language, sacred music and the arts,” to which article 39 directs itself. Article 40 admits that “in some

places and circumstances, an even more radical adaptation of the liturgy is needed"—more radical, therefore, than adapting the rites of administering the sacraments. What can this mean, if not an admission that "in some places and circumstances" the ritual of the Mass itself could and should be adapted for the spiritual profit of the respective local worshiping community or communities, always, of course, maintaining "the substantial unity of the Roman rite." To this end (that is, that these more radical adaptations be made with due circumspection), article 40 states that "the Apostolic See will grant power to the competent territorial ecclesiastical authority to permit and to direct, as the case requires, the necessary preliminary *experiments* over a determined period of time among certain groups suited for the purpose."

It is of considerable interest for the historian of the Council and of the Church to recall that it was precisely these articles on liturgical adaptation which initiated what is undoubtedly one of the most important structural changes in the Church effected by Vatican Council II: namely, the institution of territorial groups of bishops, with certain designated powers, leading to a corresponding decentralization of Roman authority. Since the need and extent of local adaptations in the liturgy can reasonably be ascertained only by those on the scene, responsible for the welfare of the flock committed to their care, the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* called for "competent territorial bodies of bishops legitimately established" (arts. 22, 36, 39, 40), even before the Council had formally discussed or decided on their establishment. This in turn helped to open up avenues of pre-occupation which led to the momentous declaration of the collegiality of all bishops under the headship of Peter.

That the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* was discussed first, and at such length, so that all present were made fully aware of its reformatory theological and pastoral implications, may well therefore, be termed providential. The Church as mystery, as sacrament, came more luminously alive in the consciousness of the Council Fathers, as well as its constant need, as in the case of all the sacraments, of renewal and change,

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while keeping intact its substance (*salva substantia*). We can only be grateful that this document did in fact play such a pioneering and inspirational role in the renewal of the Church, the goal of all the conciliar proclamations. The *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* was a firm and bold first step in that direction. And it is no doubt idle to conjecture what the results of the Council would have been, had this step not been taken, or not been taken first.

At the same time, one is sorely tempted to speculate how different the liturgy document would have been, could it have been revised or rewritten *after* the promulgation of such monumental declarations as the *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, and even more importantly, the *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*. It has become a commonplace to criticize the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* because it gives inadequate expression to the specific role of the Holy Spirit in every liturgical action, and most especially in the eucharistic celebration. But it is the major advances, the widening of theological and pastoral horizons effected by *Lumen gentium* and *Gaudium et spes* that makes us most keenly aware of the preliminary character of the Constitution and therefore of its perhaps unavoidable imperfections.

It has, for instance, been my experience that in discussing liturgical reforms with priests, or with others deeply interested in the renewal of the liturgy, and asking for opinions about specific matters that needed reform in our present Mass, without fail someone would express sharp disappointment that the Mass texts convey such a narrow or parochial, one might even say, self-centered sense of Christian charity. We pray for the pope, for the bishops, for all those present, and for all who have died with the sign of our faith. In other words, we pray for the Church; but in this sacrament of love our charity is expressly limited to our pre-conciliar understanding of the Church. The decisively important statement in *Lumen gentium* (n. 8), that "the Church constituted and organized in the world as a society, *subsists in* (rather than is identified with) the Catholic Church, which is governed by the successor of Peter

and by the bishops in union with him" had not yet been uttered or approved when the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* was issued. Consequently, the Eucharist as the bond of charity seemed and, in the texts of the Mass, still seems narrowly restricted to the visible members of the visible Roman Catholic Church. The new vision of the Church, and the renewed awareness of the primacy of all-embracing charity as the distinctive mark of Christ's disciples, must soon find explicit echo in our eucharistic texts, and thus make them more faithful to Christ's own eucharistic declaration, "this is my blood, shed for the many," that is, for all men.

Partial amends for this defect in the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* have already been made in the recent, generally excellent "Instruction on the Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery" of May 25 of this year. There we read: "In the celebration of the Eucharist, a sense of community should be fostered. Each person will then feel himself united with his brethren in the communion of the Church, local and universal, and *even in a way with all men*. In the Sacrifice of the Mass, in fact, Christ offers himself for *the salvation of the entire world*. The congregation is both *type and sign of the union of the whole human race in Christ its Head*" (n. 18). In the Eucharist, Christ does unite us with all who are our brothers in him, the second Adam, the first of his many brethren, He has thus been laying foundations of ecumenical unity through the centuries, but we are only now becoming aware of the fact, and aware also that our own best efforts can be no more than a humble building on this foundation that the Lord himself has placed.

Closely related to this broadened vision of Christian charity rooted in the Eucharist, which *Lumen gentium* has opened up for us, is the impetus which *Gaudium et spes*, the *Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, has given to the recovery of the dynamic of the Eucharist, that is to say, the understanding of the Eucharist as mission, embracing the whole world. The more static concentration on transubstantiation, or on the *res et sacramentum*, which has characterized our eucharistic devotion for centuries, is being complemented at long last by a

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stronger stress on the final *res* of the sacrament, which is an active and transforming love for all our brothers, for the entire world which Christ has redeemed with his blood. *Gaudium et spes*, more than any other conciliar document, has made us realize the critical urgency of underscoring this essential dimension of the Eucharist as mission; and failure to have done so, clearly and cogently, is, I believe, the most grievous defect of the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*.

Its famous article 10 does give us the theological principle involved. It states that "the liturgy is the *summit* towards which the activity of the Church is directed at the same time it is the *fount* from which all her power flows." Summit and fount, that is well said. The liturgy, and especially the Eucharist, is the *summit*, for, as the article continues, "the aim and object of apostolic works is that all who are made sons of God by faith and baptism should come together to praise God in the midst of his Church, to take part in the sacrifice, and to eat the Lord's supper." But despite the fact that in this same article the Constitution of set intent lists "the sancification of men in Christ" as the first and immediate purpose of the Eucharist, whereby its final and ultimately highest purpose, "the glorification of God," is concretely achieved (thus rectifying what has long been a one-sided if not exclusive cultic emphasis in eucharistic piety), it fails here and elsewhere to present a vigorous and compelling case for the Eucharist as *fount*. That Christ's body and blood is the source of strength for our human task of social love and justice, that God's gift becomes our personal and communal obligation to the world in which we live, is, most regrettably, not an evident major concern of the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*. Despite conscious efforts to strike a better balance, the cult motif still predominates at the expense of mission to men, to all men, to the world. The worship of the transcendent God continues to obscure to some extent our recognizing his immanence in the world and among the men he redeemed.

Our Holy Father has recently expressed again his growing unease at the contemporary trend in some circles to "desacralize"

the liturgy. And undoubtedly there is a present danger of a purely secular humanism attracting even the most deeply religiously committed persons. And yet, is not this a swing of the pendulum for which we share the blame? Our centuries-long record as a Church of the Eucharist is one in which, to quote a recent headline for which there is considerable historical justification we have allowed Christ on the altar to obstruct our response to Christ in the world: an over-all record of theocentricity, to the neglect of a due Christian anthropocentricity, concurrent and subsidiary, but essential. To convince ourselves and our faithful of the Eucharist's dimension of *mission* has been our most egregious liturgical failure.

Father Patrick Burke summarizes—and I believe fairly—the tragic extent of that failure when he writes: "In point of fact history shows us that very many, if not most, of the decisive steps which have been taken to improve the condition of mankind—the abolition of slavery, the spread of public education, the development of industry and science, the democratization of society, and in general the movement to bestow freedom on man—these very Christian achievements have, for the most part, been accomplished by men who either were not Christians, or who acted apart from any specifically Christian motive. . . . While the Church has fostered the worship of God, it has been largely left to those outside the Church to implement effective love of one's fellow man. It has been well pointed out that much of the atheism of the present time is simply an attempt to rescue the cause of man, and to preserve his dignity, out of the conviction that devotion to God and devotion to man are, or have become, antithetical" ("God and my Neighbor," *Worship*, March 1967, p. 163).

The lesson was brought home to me personally in a very striking manner on July 30, which President Johnson had set aside as a day of prayer for racial justice and peace. The preacher at a Mass on that day stated forcefully: "Let none of us *dare* join in saying Our Father, in this Mass, let none *dare* come up to receive holy Communion, unless he is honestly minded to work, day after day, week after week, month after month, at overcoming his own unchristian prejudices, sincerely

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determined to do something positive to alleviate the social, cultural and economic inequities which breed racial strife." And more, to the same effect. Later, the priest declared that he had never before received such audience response from any sermon he had preached, through many years of pastoral ministry. Not that the people disagreed with him. But he was appalled by their almost unanimous declaration that they had never before really associated racial justice and charity with receiving holy Communion!

Even if Christ's last discourse, recorded by John, was not spoken at the occasion of the Last Supper, the very fact that John places it in that context more forcibly underscores the intrinsic and necessary relation of Eucharist and mission. "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, that you have love one for another." The liturgical renewal, as well as the renewal of the Church, is illusory, is much ado about little, unless and until we succeed in effectively teaching that lesson of love as the soul of the renewal.

But it is perhaps chiefly the sincere effort to teach precisely this lesson, that accounts for what is a very widespread and seemingly uncontrollable phenomenon on the liturgical scene today. I refer, of course, to the multiple kinds of unauthorized experimental masses, the so-called basement, clandestine, or—sometimes—bootleg masses that are taking place to a greater or lesser extent in many countries, and which Cardinal Lercaro, head of the liturgical Consilium, has sharply condemned. If there is one principle that is predominant in the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, and which has been reiterated almost time without number in the subsequent documents, it is the axiom that the Eucharist signifies and effects community. On the other hand, the most obvious fact about Catholics today is that they are becoming ever more concentrated in urban centers, whose characteristics are mobility and anonymity. Some thirty years ago already, the Berlin sociologist Dr. Karl Sonnenschein expressed his conviction that, objectively speaking, the most grievous sin in the Catholic Church today is the huge city parish. And I am reminded of a perceptive American bishop who cited, as chief reason for leakage in the Church, the practice of Mass

every hour on the hour. Even the divine power of the Eucharist cannot normally be expected to effect any meaningful experience of community under such circumstances. Hence the almost universal clamor for permission to experiment in smaller assemblies, in what sociologists call primary groups, in which true interpersonal relations are at least humanly possible and can be deepened.

This striving for Christian community, and the new and desperately urgent pastoral demands occasioned by the contemporary crisis of faith, especially among our youth, who in their passion for genuineness and sincerity reject whatever is unmeaningful for them, has undoubtedly been the motivating force in many of these underground eucharistic celebrations. In other instances, of course, the itch for novelty or for not being outdone in occupying an avant garde position is causing disregard for accepted liturgical structures and rules. It seems a needless tragedy that, during these days of thoroughgoing liturgical reform, when the liturgical iceberg has become an avalanche, there are truly zealous and conscientious priests who feel honestly obliged to resort to the same disregard of existing laws for the sake of the souls in their pastoral care. And I believe there is a way in which that zeal need not be driven underground but can be lawfully channelled and be made to contribute substantially to the total cause of spiritual renewal through the liturgy.

In article 23, the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* rightly calls for preparatory theological, historical, and pastoral studies to be made of any part of the liturgy that is in need of reform. The Consilium has undoubtedly enlisted the help of highly competent theologians and historians of the liturgy. The genesis of the Liturgical Constitution itself, resting as it did on the grass-roots experiences of a liturgical movement of some forty years, should be convincing precedent that, for the success of the ongoing reforms, there is imperative need of inviting and exploiting fully and generously whatever pastoral wisdom gained from experience can contribute. And profitable pastoral experience demands of its very nature the help of the contemporary behavioral sciences, of sociology, of psychology, and

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—not least of all—of the science of communications, not to speak of enlisting the aid of competent historians of religion, and of liturgists of other than the Roman Catholic tradition. By calling upon such help, and most especially by embodying the grass-roots experience that can only be gained through what the Constitution itself still calls “the *necessary* preliminary experiments over a period of time among certain groups suited for the purpose” (art. 40), experiments authorized by the territorial groups of bishops so empowered by the Holy See, the Consilium can, and I am confident is most willing, to give a broader and profounder foundation to its own enlightened and indispensable work.

According to the Constitution, the burden of initiative for these necessary experiments lies with the various territorial groups of bishops. One can only therefore hopefully plead that at least some of them will very soon take effective action, and positively support the zeal of so many of their priests who now search, within and sometimes outside of rubrical laws, to make the Mass in fact the summit and fount of their people's Christian living in the world of today.

At the risk of being presumptuous, may I venture to indicate concretely what a group of liturgically knowledgeable and concerned laity, religious, and priests drew up some time ago as a possible framework of such experimental Masses for smaller groups, whether in a school, in the home, or for any smaller eucharistic assembly. They attempted, not to compose an alternate rite with its own prescriptive rubrics but, while safeguarding the traditional essentials of the eucharistic celebration, to allow for the widest flexibility in the non-essentials to meet the varying needs and circumstances of the respective group.

## MASS FOR SMALL GROUPS

### *Introduction*

So far as circumstances may permit, all present greet each other informally, or are made acquainted with each other. After this

initial sense of community and friendship has been established, the priest confirms it with a blessing or collect.

*Liturgy of the Word*

1. The service of the Word need not take place in close proximity to the table of the Eucharist. There may be one or several readings. Not every reading need be from scripture, but the Gospel lesson may never be omitted. If the occasion warrants, the community with the guidance and approval of the priest may choose the readings, always keeping in mind the spirit of the feast or season. Instead of a spoken or sung response, a period of reflective silence may follow each of the readings. After the Gospel, the priest will give a homily; he may also invite brief comments on the readings from the participants, whether before or after the homily.

2. The Prayer of the Faithful may suitably include an expression of communal failing and of petition for reconciliation, particularly if this be suggested by the content of the homily and/or the participants' comments. An appropriate gesture of brotherly peace may then follow. Unless special reasons suggest otherwise, the Creed is normally omitted; if it is recited, the Apostles' Creed will usually be given preference to the Nicene.

*Liturgy of the Eucharist*

1. *Offertory.* The table is prepared for the liturgy of the Eucharist, and the gifts are brought forward. These are accepted by the priest, who thereupon recites the customary prayer over the offerings.

2. *Preface and Eucharistic Prayer.* A much greater variety of prefaces is urgently needed, to relate the saving mysteries more clearly and explicitly to the concrete situations of the community at worship. Until these are forthcoming, the priest may choose whatever preface will seem most appropriate to

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the occasion. In particular circumstances, the priest, especially if properly qualified by liturgical training, may be permitted to compose a preface which more suitably embodies the specific pastoral needs of a given eucharistic assembly. Since the *Sanctus* is the people's unique opportunity of joining their voices to the sacrifice of praise, this should if possible be done in song.

Perhaps some members of this Congress could stimulate similar plans, or improve on the one just now suggested, and even persuade a national hierarchy to sponsor it. Such a step would help to wrest order from what may now seem to be an impending liturgical chaos; it would free good men's souls, and would tap hitherto unutilized reservoirs of valuable assistance in the spiritual renewal of the Church by means of liturgical reforms.

## 6.

# LIBERTY OF SPIRIT: "THE MIRROR OF SIMPLE SOULS"<sup>1</sup>

EDMUND COLLEDGE, O.S.A.

ROMANA Guarnieri's contention, so startling when it was first presented,<sup>2</sup> that the anonymous *Mirror of Simple Souls*, surviving in numerous versions of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, is none other than the book written by Margaret Porete of Hainault, has won general acceptance. Briefly, it should be recalled that we possess, in addition to two propositions extracted from her book and quoted in the sparse record of her trial and condemnation as a relapsed heretic at Paris in 1310, others cited in contemporary sources, and all these can be found, verbatim, in the *Mirror*. Now that we can consult Dr. Guarnieri's edition of one extant manuscript which descends from Margaret's original French, as well as the exhaustive study of the documents for a history of "liberty of the spirit" in the later Middle Ages which serves as preface to that edition,<sup>3</sup> we are for the first time able to form judgments on the justice of

<sup>1</sup> I am indebted to Dr. Romana Guarnieri, Fr. Michael Winter, and Dom Alexius McNeil for criticism, encouragement, and help in the writing of this paper.

<sup>2</sup> "Lo 'Specchio delle anime semplici' e Margherita Porete," *L'Osservatore Romano* 141 (June 16, 1946), p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> "Il Movimento del Libero Spirito, Testi e Documenti, I"; "Il Movimento del Libero Spirito dalle Origini al Secolo XVI, II"; "Il 'Miroir des Simples Ames' di Margherita Porete, III"; "Appendici," *Archivio Italiano per la Storia della Pietà* IV, Rome, 1965, pp. 353-708.

## LIBERTY OF SPIRIT: "THE MIRROR OF SIMPLE SOULS"

Margaret's condemnation. About this there is much disagreement. Critics of the eminence of Axters and Porion incline to the view that she was wrongly sentenced; but, although Dr. Guarnieri's work has been attacked as biased,<sup>4</sup> it is indeed written from a strictly neutral point of view, presenting the historical facts, indicating the conclusions, often conflicting, which can in their light be drawn from the *Mirror*, advancing no personal theories, leaving open the question whether Margaret, and the many others who professed "liberty of the spirit," were in truth formal heretics.

For reasons which presently will be indicated, however summarily, my own opinion is that Margaret was such, knowingly and willingly separating herself from the Church, denying much of its teaching, and advancing doctrines which had been pronounced false, many of them centuries before. But this is often hard to prove, because such matters are usually presented in the *Mirror* in language calculatedly ambiguous and vague. Partly, this was dictated by caution and fear; the book was written in an epoch when the agents of an enfeebled Church were conducting a campaign against heresy with a merciless and murderous savagery rarely equalled in European history. But also, as will be seen, it is of the essence of the *Mirror* that it should have been written, as it were, in a code open only to a few, who will understand, because they already know by their own experience, its revelations of the secrets of the communion with God of the "souls set free," whereas with the many it will pass as a harmless devout collection of Christian pieties. And this in fact did happen. Although Dr. Guarnieri has justly written that the *Mirror* became on the European continent the Bible of "liberty of the spirit," the two versions of it made in England are by translators who state and defend their conviction that

<sup>4</sup> See especially the adverse notices, directed more against her article, "Frères du libre esprit," *DSAM* V (1964), cols. 1241–1268, than against "Il Movimento," by Fr. Bernard Spaapen in *Ons Geestelijk Erf* 40 (1966), p. 350, and in "Le Mouvement des 'Frères du libre esprit,' et les mystiques flamandes du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle," *RAM* XLII (1966), pp. 423–437.

the work is orthodox and spiritually fruitful, even though they obviously knew of some of the charges which were leveled at it.<sup>5</sup>

There is not time, nor is a session of this Congress the place, to examine Margaret's views on such topics as the Eucharist, grace and free will, and "deification." But I think that it may be relevant and profitable for us to consider what can be learned, from the *Mirror* and comparable documents, about what Margaret and those like her believed concerning the nature and functions of the Church.

The dominant theme of the *Mirror*, which informs the entire book, is that when a soul is granted in this present life a full and abiding vision of the divine nature, and becomes itself one with that nature, it is thereby set free to enjoy such vision and union, and to do nothing else. Those versed in the history of Christian mysticism will at once see how many questions a statement like this raises. For example, is this union, this "deification," of grace or of nature, is it of resemblance or of essence, is it God's free gift or the soul's independent attainment? We know what the right answers are, but many of Margaret's contemporaries who truly wished to reconcile their own experience of unitive prayer with the Church's teachings did not see how to do this. Mechtild of Magdeburg can only write: "In one place in this book I said that the Godhead is my Father by nature, but you [her critics] did not understand this, that everything which God has done with us is all of grace and not by nature. . . . You are right; and I too am right."<sup>6</sup> But when, leaving aside such questions, we enquire what kind of liberty the soul gains in its union with God, we find that Margaret taught a false quietism of an extreme form, which bears directly on her attitude to the Church.

<sup>5</sup> See Edmund Colledge and Romana Guarneri, "The Glosses of M. N. and Richard Methley: Glosses to 'The Mirror of Simple Souls,'" *Archivio Italiano* V, 1967, pp. 357-382. It was not only in England that this happened. For Blessed Giovanni Tavelli's defence of his fellow-Gesuati and, by implication, of the *Mirror*, their devotion to which was under investigation, see "Il Movimento," pp. 470-473.

<sup>6</sup> Gall Morel, *Offenbarungen der Schwester Mechthild*, Regensburg, 1896, p. 205.

She seems to go out of her way to assert, as crudely as possible, that the proper state of an illumined and liberated soul is a total passivity, unless it be God's will, not that she act, for in such a state she never will do so, but that he act in her. "This Soul, says Love, no longer performs any works for God, or for herself, or for her neighbors either . . . but God, who can perform them, does this if it is his will; and if he does not will it, she is no more concerned for the one than for the other; she is always in the same state."<sup>7</sup> This passivity will result in freedom from care for her neighbours: "Whatever may be said, all works are forbidden to her in the simple life of the divinity, as it was once commanded by Christ, the Son of God the Father.<sup>8</sup> She has come to such an end that she has nothing with which she could do evil, for Love gives to her all things, and makes her to be at rest in the face of her fellow-Christians."<sup>9</sup> She will cease even from preoccupation about God himself; she "does nothing for God," because just as he need not care for his works, so need not she, in her divinized state.<sup>10</sup>

It will at once be obvious how such quietism contributed to some of the more famous *scandala*, quoted by the chroniclers, extracted from the *Mirror* and advanced against Margaret at her trial: "That the Soul Brought to Nothing takes leave of the

<sup>7</sup> This and all subsequent quotations from the *Mirror* are from an as yet unpublished and still provisional translation made by collating the French text with the fourteenth-century translations into Latin (of which there are three manuscripts, all in the Biblioteca Vaticana: Chigiano C., iv 85, "C"; Rossiano 4, "R"; and Vat. Lat. 4355, "V") and English, of which a critical text, *The Mirror of Simple Souls*, edited by Sister Marilyn Doiron, is contained in *Archivio Italiano* V, pp. 241–353, and with their translation respectively into Italian (for the oldest translation, that in MS Florence Ricciardano 1468, "Ri," has here been used) and Latin (by Richard Methley, in MS Cambridge Pembroke 221). See "Il Movimento," pp. 504–509. The present quotation is on p. 574, ll. 19–22. Variants are numerous: the French, but not the Latin, here has "He [God] is no more concerned . . . , " and "C" and "R" have "He [God] is always in the same state."

<sup>8</sup> This alludes to an earlier discussion of the roles of Mary and Martha; see Lk. 1, 42.

<sup>9</sup> *Miroir*, p. 633, ll. 27–30.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 529, ll. 29–31.

virtues and is no longer in their service," "That such a Soul has no care for God's consolations and gifts,"<sup>11</sup> and, in particular, to the notorious statement that "This Soul neither desires nor despises poverty or tribulation, Masses or sermons, fasting or prayer, and gives to Nature all that it must, with no qualm of conscience."<sup>12</sup> With the last clause of this third proposition we need not now concern ourselves, except to remark that elsewhere<sup>13</sup> the evidence has been stated for believing that the disclaimer to it, which in the French text, follows it immediately, "but Nature itself, is not so well ordered, being transformed in the union with Love, to whom this Soul's will is joined, that Nature never asks anything which is forbidden," a disclaimer upon which those who would defend Margaret's orthodoxy rely much, was probably not in her original text and probably not written by her. But the Soul's indifference to Masses and prayers is immediate to our present purpose. The statement is later repeated, with the explanation that "the divine will does not trouble these exalted creatures with such burdens."<sup>14</sup> Again, later, "Why should the Soul desire [Masses and sermons, fasting or prayers], since God is everywhere, just as much without them as with them?",<sup>15</sup> and, later still, "She who is such no longer seeks God through penance or through any sacrament of Holy Church, not through thought or word or work . . ."<sup>16</sup> In the hundredth chapter this doctrine is stated most succinctly: "She [the Soul] does not lack him [God], so why should she seek him?"<sup>17</sup>

How, we may ask, could anyone in her own time, can anyone now defend the author of statements like these as an orthodox Christian? Let us examine the way in which "M. N.," the fourteenth-century English translator and glossator,<sup>18</sup> and Richard Methley, the Mount Grace Carthusian who in 1491 re-

<sup>11</sup> See "The Glosses of M. N. and Richard Methley."

<sup>12</sup> *Miroir*, p. 527, ll. 17-21.

<sup>13</sup> "The Glosses of M.N. and Richard Methley."

<sup>14</sup> *Miroir*, p. 534, ll. 20-21.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 537, ll. 5-6.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 586, ll. 32-34.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 597, l. 30.

<sup>18</sup> See above, note 7.

translated M. N.'s English into Latin,<sup>19</sup> providing his own glosses, reconcile this difficulty with their insistence that the *Mirror* is untainted with false doctrine. M. N.'s explanation, one which he often puts forward, is that here the Soul speaks only of her moments of union with God in prayer, when she can think of nothing inferior to that union. In the earlier stages of their spiritual life, such souls do desire contempt and poverty and all the rest; but when the Soul attains to mystical union, she perceives that her own efforts have been as nothing compared with God's drawing close to her, and her first attention is to preserve that union. She continues such outward observances, but without the fervor and pleasure which once she found in them. She seems to herself to be nothing and to do nothing, for she knows that it is God who in her does everything. It is in this sense that she does not desire Masses and sermons, fasting and prayers, not that she is careless of such matters, but because it is God in her who has the care.<sup>20</sup> Methley, however, translates the passage without comment, as again when the same remarks are repeated in chapters 13 and 16; but when this last continues "Since it is so that God is above all, and is as well without these things as with them,"<sup>21</sup> Methley is at last moved to write: "[The Soul] uses Masses, sermons, fasting and prayers in a strange way, but this is how she is worked upon, by divine love. I do not say that she works, but that she is worked upon, even though it follows in a certain way that she must work. As it is written, 'My beloved is mine and I am his,'<sup>22</sup> so she is worked upon by divine love, so that at this time she is not moved by any love of such things."<sup>23</sup> But the essential question is not whether the Soul is moved by such love, but whether she is inspired by contempt for the sacraments and the laws of the Church; and though he does not make this at all clear, Methley is here implying what he had read in M. N.'s comment, that the Soul does indeed love

<sup>19</sup> See above, note 7.

<sup>20</sup> *Mirror*, p. 256.

<sup>21</sup> *Miroir*, p. 536, ll. 42–43.

<sup>22</sup> Cant. 2, 16.

<sup>23</sup> MS Pembroke, 221, f. 60<sup>b</sup>.

what is enjoined by the Church, and that she can only be said not so to love because, in her perfect unity with God, it is no longer she, but God in her, who so loves.

Earlier, in his running commentary on chapter 4, Methley has made this point more plainly. "*Charity neglects her own affairs and attends to those of others.* Sometimes, though not always, she forgets what is owing, and what is not owing she never claims, unless both are possible. Yet here or later it ought to be emphasized, if that can well be done, that the debts which she forgoes are in no way those things which are enjoined by the Church or by a religious order."<sup>24</sup>

But if the Soul were so obedient, she would hardly have received in silence, nor have suffered Reason to be persuaded by Love's teachings on the subject of the "Two Churches," "Holy Church the Greater" and "Holy Church the Less"; and with this we come to the core of Margaret's teaching. Especially in the early chapters of the *Mirror*, mention is made and deference shown to "the laws of the Church." In chapter 3 we are told that its laws consist in the evangelical precepts and the counsels of perfection<sup>25</sup>; and in chapter 7 we find "Everything which this Soul does, she does because it is some commendable practice, or because Holy Church commands it . . ."<sup>26</sup> Yet we cannot read far without perceiving that the author is using the term "Holy Church" with cryptic meaning. In chapter 10, among the list of the twelve secret names by which the Soul is called, we read, "She upon whom all Holy Church is founded."<sup>27</sup> We have to wait until chapter 43 for a gloss upon this: "O, true God, Holy Spirit! says Holy Church. Indeed, Holy Church, says Love, you are inferior to this Holy Church! For such Souls, says Love, are properly called Holy Church, for they support and teach and nourish the whole of Holy Church; and yet not they, says Love, but the whole Trinity

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 51<sup>a</sup>.

<sup>25</sup> *Miroir*, pp. 522, l. 20 to 523, l. 5.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 526, ll. 3-4

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 528, l. 9.

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through them; and this is true, says Love, let no one doubt it. O Holy Church, inferior to this Holy Church, say now, says Love, what do you wish to say of these Souls, who are so commended and praised above you, you who in all things act by the advice of Reason? We would say, says Holy Church, that such Souls are above us in life, for Love dwells in them and Reason dwells in us."<sup>28</sup>

What, then, are the marks by which this "Holy Church the Less" is to be known? Firstly, as we have just seen, that she is governed not by Love, answerable only to its own law, but by Reason; and a dominant theme in the *Mirror* is that the Soul's approach to God is in essence a fight against and a victory over reason and its dictates. Often, indeed, we can equate the personifications "Reason" and "Holy Church the Less," as in chapter 86, where Reason is speaking in the character of that Church who must rule and guide the unillumined when she says, in reply to Love's observation, "She who is such no longer seeks God through penance or through any sacrament of Holy Church . . .", "O God, O God, O God . . . what does this creature say? This is utter bewilderment! What will my young ones say? I shall not know what to say to them, nor what to answer, so as to excuse this."<sup>29</sup> In chapter 19, already, this Church has been called "a created thing,"<sup>30</sup> inferior, the implication is, to uncreated Love; and in chapter 51, this Church greets the Soul as her "mistress."<sup>31</sup> Occasionally, the *Mirror* descends from its customary heights of allegory and personification to make plain Margaret's contempt for the whole external organization of this "Holy Church the Less":

Lovers, what will the Beguines say and the religious,  
When they shall hear the excellence of your divine song?  
The Beguines say that I am all astray, and priests, and clerics,  
The Austin Friars, the Carmelites and the Friars Minor, the  
Preachers,

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 555, ll. 24–33.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 586, l. 32 to 587, l. 5.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 539, ll. 30–33.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 561, ll. 10–11.

Because of what I write of the being of Purified Love.<sup>82</sup>

It is not merely an existing hierarchical structure which is so despised; Scripture and revelation, to which "Holy Church the Less" would appeal, are likewise put out of court. "Only those to whom God has given it can have understanding of the Soul's contempt for all creation, for Scripture does not contain it, man's senses cannot understand it, no creature's labouring will be rewarded by perceiving or comprehending it."<sup>83</sup> "Every teacher of human wisdom, every doctor of Scripture, everyone who still loves his subjection to the Virtues does not and will not understand this as it should be understood. Be sure of this, Reason, says Love, only those will understand it who are called by Purified Love."<sup>84</sup> "It would be a great hardship to me [the Soul] to make me listen when people speak to me of you [Love], for they are mistaken, believing that they can speak so, for I know for certain that no one can say anything, and, please God, I shall no longer be led astray, and I no longer wish to hear lies about your goodness, but only to finish what I have undertaken in this book, of which Love is the instructress, and she has told me that I shall finish all my undertakings. For if I ask anything for myself of Love for her sake, it is to be alone in the life of the spirit, in the shadow of the sun . . ."<sup>85</sup>

It is evident that there can be no real communion between such liberated spirits, set free for the service of Love, and those whom Reason binds by her authority to the observance of laws. Only the illumined can communicate with one another, can recognize one another. "Few men know where [such Souls] are, but it is fitting to the very goodness of Love that there should be such Souls, to uphold the faith of Holy Church,"<sup>86</sup> the greater Church, needless to say. "Such as are such know such as are,"<sup>87</sup> and, constantly, the *Mirror* says that they will

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 618, l. 35 to 619, l. 1.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 525, ll. 27-30.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 527, ll. 26-30.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 531, ll. 12-19.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 538, ll. 5-7.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 540, ll. 6-7.

know one another by their usages, their customs, their rites, a mysterious term which provided the medieval translators with one of their greatest problems. "Sometimes indeed it happens that in the whole of a kingdom one will not find two creatures who are of one spirit, but when it chances that two such creatures find one another, they declare themselves one to the other, unable to disguise themselves, and if they wished to they could not, such is their state of soul, their temperament, their way of life to which they are called, whether they will it or not. . . . If God has given you his sublime creation, his excelling light, his incomparable love, confirm and multiply that creation without failing; for God's two eyes are always watching you, and if you will consider and ponder this well, God's watch upon you will make the soul simple."<sup>38</sup> This is no mere intellectual simplicity, but the divine attribute infusing the divinized Soul, admitting her to a hidden, closed, secret society, in the world but concealed from it. "[The Soul who is dead for Love] has made an end of it with the world, and the world has made an end of it with her and said farewell. . . . She is so hidden and laid up in God that the world and the flesh and the adversaries<sup>39</sup> cannot harm her, because they cannot find her occupied in their works; and so such a Soul lives in the rest of peace, for she takes no heed of any created thing."<sup>40</sup>

Again, what do the medieval glossators, campaigning for the *Mirror* as free from error, make of this opposition of one "Holy Church" to another? M. N. passes it over in silence, and so, at first does Methley, except that his translation of the relevant passage in chapter 19, "Verum . . . ecclesia catholica parua, que racione regitur, sed non ecclesia catholica magna . . . qui per nos regitur,"<sup>41</sup> by its addition of "catholica," colors the remark. He repeats this in chapter 49; and there he is constrained to comment: "There are as many churches or contemplatives in

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 635, ll. 15-25.

<sup>39</sup> The Latin version has 'the devil,' but, as will be seen, Margaret's use of 'adversary' is significant.

<sup>40</sup> *Miroir*, p. 557, ll. 1-5.

<sup>41</sup> MS Pembroke 221, f. 61<sup>a</sup>-<sup>b</sup>.

churches" . . . "as there are of the faithful in monasteries, abbeys, colleges, parishes, and major and minor states of perfection."<sup>42</sup> But that he must surely have seen that this is not what the *Mirror* means is indicated by a later comment to this same chapter, where he adds to "But what [the Souls] are, to speak of their worth and dignity, neither you [the Theological Virtues] nor they know this, because Holy Church cannot know it,"<sup>43</sup> the remark, "This shows that the lesser and the greater are one Church."<sup>44</sup>

This unease is in truth well justified, for, although Methley and those of his orthodox contemporaries who defended the *Mirror* cannot have known it, Margaret's teaching about "Holy Church the Greater" and "Holy Church the Less" exposes the very roots of her doctrine, reaching down more than a millennium into Valentinian Gnosticism.

It is difficult for the modern experts to write with precision about the teachings of the Valentinians and the other Gnostic sects, because, firstly, this was a mystery-religion, careful to guard its secrets from all but its own adepts, and, also, because the Church itself was at pains, as it suppressed such movements, to destroy all possible evidence of their existence. Some such witness has, however, survived from ancient times; especially, the discovery twenty years ago of the "library of Chenoboskion" is providing us, as these papyri are published, with a corpus of primitive Gnostic texts which are confirming in remarkable fashion the evidence on which, until now, scholars have had to rely, notably the polemics of such early adversaries of the Gnostics as Irenaeus. From all that we know we can see that the Gnostic system was fundamentally anti-Christian in its rejection of any belief that the material world was the creation, *ex nihilo*, of a Creator perfect in all his attributes. They believed in the existence of such a perfect God, but the only way in which they could protect their conception of his perfection was to

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 62<sup>c-d</sup>.

<sup>43</sup> *Miroir*, p. 539, ll. 17-18.

<sup>44</sup> *MS Pembroke*, 221, f. 61<sup>d</sup>.

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deny, as did all other dualistic systems, that the world of matter, in their eyes wholly evil, was the work of his hands. Instead, they attributed it to "the Adversary," God's enemy; and they made a bridge, a link between God's immutable spiritual world, beyond all the heavens, where he, supremely good, has his existence, the Pleroma, and this visible earth inhabited by creatures, the Kenoma, in the "Demiurge," the intermediary between good and evil. They taught that it is through *gnosis*, the secret knowledge revealed only to initiates, that they can attain from the Kenoma to the Pleroma. This bridge consists of the "pairs," the "eight-fold Godhead, or a Godhead with eight principal attributes or aspects, the source of all other being."<sup>45</sup> The highest of these pairs is in its nature and being most like to God's perfection, and so in descending order as they approximate to human nature, base from its origins rather than fallen. Different Gnostic sects seem to have taught differently about the ranks and names of these "pairs," but almost always in one of them is a member called *Ecclesia*, the "Church." In most systems this member has been relegated to the lowest "pair," "Man—Church" (this idea is implicit in the Gnostic Ptolemy's exposition of how the law of Moses, commanding what Christ himself admits to be imperfect, cannot be the work either of God, who is perfect, nor yet of the "Adversary," but was framed by the Demiurge);<sup>46</sup> but it has been suggested that in early Gnosticism a different "pair," "Christ—Church," was at the summit of this Godhead, closest to God, furthest from matter and from man.<sup>47</sup> It is difficult to doubt that Margaret's "Holy Church the Greater" is the Gnostics' *Ecclesia*, although we do not as yet know by what means this and the many other relics of *gnosis* which we find in her book and in the other documented beliefs of those

<sup>45</sup> Although Gnosticism differs from "Liberty of the Spirit" by its stress on the intellectual superiority of its adherents to the unenlightened, we find in the *Mirror* this same constant insistence that what has been revealed to the Soul concerning her own nature is divine knowledge, and essentially esoteric.

<sup>46</sup> Jean Daniélou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity*, London, 1964, pp. xii–xiii.

<sup>47</sup> "Lettre à Flora," *Sources Chrétiennes* 24, Paris, 1949.

who taught "liberty of the spirit" had been transmitted to them.

Margaret herself, as we have seen, is very sure that the faithful of this "Holy Church the Greater" are at rest, and need no longer strive for the perfection which they have attained. There is a passage in chapter 69 of the *Mirror*, where she treats of this, which provided the commentators with many difficulties (M. N. can only solve them by his usual plea that what she says applies only to brief moments of ecstasy). Though the French, and the Latin and Italian translations (unlike the English) seem to be free from corruptions, the passage is hard to interpret; but it seems to mean as follows: "Ah, for the love of God, says Reason, you sweetest spotless flower, what do you think of our way of life? It seems to me, says this Soul, a labour full of care; and yet man earns his food and his livelihood through his labour and in such care, and Jesus Christ by his own bodily labour extolled it, for he saw the fleshly nature of those who would save themselves by such labour, and that they needed some assurance. And Jesus Christ, who never wished to lose them, gave them himself this assurance through his death, and through his Gospels, and through his Scriptures; and it is by these that labouring men find their way. And where do you find your way, our sweetest lady, says Reason, you who do nothing, and perform no such toilsome labours, and have such gifts by faith alone? No, truly, says this Soul, I am free of all that. What I have is better, and it is elsewhere, and it is so far from this (life of labour) that one can make no comparison. (My way has its goal in God, who knows nothing of time; I do know time, as I wait to receive from him what is mine, and that is that I may safely be established in my nothingness.)"<sup>48</sup> We can see that this corresponds, unambiguously, with what Irenaeus says that the Gnostics of his age taught on the necessity for the salvation of the unillumined, for which salvation Christ came upon earth. These unillumined ones will progress through toil and faith, but they have not that perfect knowledge "which we have who are of the Church."<sup>49</sup> The soteriology of

<sup>48</sup> Daniélou, *op. cit.*, p. 302.

<sup>49</sup> *Miroir*, p. 573, ll. 2–16; V f. 76, Ri f. 44<sup>r</sup>.

the Gnostics is one of the most puzzling aspects of their doctrine to systematize<sup>50</sup>; but Margaret's evident concurrence, here at least, with those of them who denied the universality of Christ's redemptive work is in harmony with numerous other places in the *Mirror* where her Christology is more than dubious.

If we reread the *Mirror* with knowledge of what was the Gnostic attitude towards time and eternity, matter and spirit, the correspondences are sometimes remarkable; and if we examine some of the earliest Gnostic texts, we find many of Margaret's sentiments anticipated in them by a thousand years. An excellent anthology of such *dicta* is the *Gospel of Thomas*, one of the Chenoboskion papyri now available to us in translation.<sup>51</sup> The natural, material world is irremediably evil and corrupt: "He who has known the world has found a corpse."<sup>52</sup> The Soul can only look for release from matter and the flesh (as Bareille has succinctly expressed it, "not the redemption of this world, but redemption in this world"<sup>53</sup>): "If the flesh has come into existence because of spirit, it is a marvel, but if spirit has come into existence because of the body, it is a marvel of marvels. But I marvel at how this great wealth has settled down in this poverty,"<sup>54</sup> and, elsewhere: "Wretched is the body that depends on a body, and wretched is the soul that depends on both."<sup>55</sup> Outward religious observances are the death of the spirit: "Jesus said to them: If you fast you will beget sin for yourselves, and if you pray you will be condemned, and if you give alms you will do evil to your spirits."<sup>56</sup> Such observances must be performed or neglected in perfect liberty: "His disciples asked him: Do you wish us to fast, and in what way shall we pray? . . . Jesus said: Do not speak a lie, and do not do what you hate."<sup>57</sup>

<sup>50</sup> *Contra Haereses* I 6 (PG 7 coll. 503–6).

<sup>51</sup> See the perceptive study by Etienne Cornelis, "Le Gnosticisme," *DSAM* fasc. 39, 1965, coll. 523–541.

<sup>52</sup> See Kurt Aland, *Synopsis Quattuor Evangeliorum*, Stuttgart, 1964, pp. 517–530.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 524; a variant is on p. 527.

<sup>54</sup> G. Bareille, "Gnosticisme," *DTC* V, col. 1461.

<sup>55</sup> Aland, *op. cit.*, p. 521.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 527; a variant is on p. 529.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 519.

When the spirit first receives such light, it will only engender bewilderment—a constantly recurring theme in the *Mirror*—but in such light the *illuminati* will recognize themselves and one another.<sup>58</sup>

I have attempted, within the limits at my disposal, to indicate my reasons for believing that Margaret Porete was a heretic, and consciously so; but I can see that the methods which I have employed are not without their dangers. Those who wish to defend the orthodoxy of *The Mirror of Simple Souls* will be able, if they are familiar with its text, to point to many places where she seems to contradict the false teachings which I have examined; and I have drawn attention to those medieval students of her book who accepted and revered it as a deeply spiritual work. This is not my own judgment in the *Mirror*, and I consider that people like Methley and the Gesuati were seduced by the superficial resemblances which it bears to the writings of Pseudo-Dionysius. It is a canon among those who have taught the techniques of *probatio*, *discretio*, the scrutiny of spiritual writings for falsehood or truth, that they must be known by their fruits, especially in their authors,<sup>59</sup> who should be marked by their humility, their obedience to competent guidance, their lack of secretiveness, their willing submission to the verdict of others, whether it be favorable or not. Judged by such elementary but essential rules as this, the *Mirror* fails, for despite all the Soul's protestations of her wretched nothingness, the entire book is characterized by a stubborn, willful determination to persist in its opinions, by a spiritual arrogance which could surely find no place in a truly "Simple Soul." If we judge it merely as a literary work, it is easy to perceive why it should have been so esteemed; in many places its writing rises to great heights, and Margaret understood well how to produce the overcharged emotional response which she desired in her "hearers," her "auditors" (it should be remembered that the *Mirror* was composed to be read

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 517-518.

<sup>59</sup> For one such exponent of the technique, see E. Colledge, "Epistola Solitarii ad Reges. Alphonse of Pecha as Organizer of Birgittine and Urbanist Propaganda," *Mediaeval Studies* 17 (1956), pp. 19-49.

aloud, presumably in the initiates' conventicles). But it is not as a work of art that we are considering it.

Those who are disposed to defend the *Mirror*, and the movement which it represents, as spiritually and morally sound can, in my opinion, be led astray in different directions. A very natural distaste, to use no stronger word, for any such institution as the mediaeval Inquisition, and for its methods, predisposes many to believe that its victims were as often as not innocent of the charges brought against them; but, confining myself to the case of Margaret Porete alone, I would stress that the rediscovery of her book has shown that the other records of her trial have a historical content. In the *Mirror* we have, word for word, everything that the chroniclers say that she taught and for which she was condemned. The whole affair, and the publicity which attached to it, produced, it is true, further disastrous results. It undoubtedly contributed directly to the persecution of the Begards and to the anathemas pronounced against them at the Council of Vienne, which, in their turn, led to the collapse of every organization such as those explored for us by Grundmann<sup>60</sup> and Mens,<sup>61</sup> to the stifling of every aspiration for the unlearned and the laity to emerge as a potent spiritual force in the Church. That lay apostolate which the Church today blesses and praises and invokes was then savagely repressed, as the Church struggled desperately to combat false doctrine and meet the challenge to its authority. How little success it had in either undertaking belongs to history; how little worthy many of its ministers were of the powers and responsibilities which they refused to share is known to us all. It is not I who am saying but St. Thomas More who said that one of the causes of the overthrow of Catholicism in his day was "a clergy lacking grace." The *Mirror* leaves us in no doubt that this was also Margaret's

<sup>60</sup> Herbert Grundmann, *Religiöse Bewegungen im Mittelalter*, Hildesheim, 1961, with an appendix, "Neue Beiträge zur Geschichte der religiösen Bewegungen im Mittelalter; and see also "Ketzerverhöre des Spätmittelalters als quellenkritisches Problem." *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters* 21, (1965), pp. 519-575.

<sup>61</sup> Alcantara Mens, *Oorsprong en betekenis van de nederlandse beginnen - en begarden beweging*, Antwerp, 1947.

opinion; but let us beware lest our sympathies betray us into seeing, in her and her book, saving forces which the Church might have employed, which it rejected to its undoing.

Certainly, appraisal of the *Mirror* cannot remain coldly intellectual. It is not possible to read its pages in the knowledge that their unhappy author paid for them with a hideous death, one cannot peruse the ghastly catalogue of intimidations, persecutions, torture, and butchery which constitutes the record of the suppression of sects such as the Begards, without revulsion and shame that the Church, the Bride of Christ, should so have befouled herself. Nor can one refrain from asking how much of Margaret's scorn for "Holy Church the Less" was inspired by its acts, as she and her coreligionists had experienced them.

But even so, as we today look back with sorrow and contrition upon these woeful chapters in the history of the Church, as we wait and work for that renewal in which the Church may be again formed more perfectly in the image of Christ, we shall err—and this error is today very prevalent—if we attribute merits to those who separated themselves from the Church which they did not possess. There is no act of those who sought to exterminate the "Brethren of the Free Spirit" which is not to be condemned by all who assent to the Second Vatican Council's *Declaration on Religious Freedom*; but what assent, one must ask, could the "Brethren," could Margaret Porete have honestly given to *Lumen Gentium*? As we consider the *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, and the long process of theological reappraisal which preceded its formulation, we must surely recognize that if Christ's Church is to fulfill his mission on earth, if its universality is to reflect God's will that all men shall hear and receive his saving message, any conception of that Church as "a purely interior and invisible unity of those who have been justified,"<sup>62</sup> whether it be by faith or by *gnosis*, must be rejected. Bishop Butler has written of the great Anglican theologian, Maurice, as "one who has seen that the Church, by its very nature, represents the duality of the divine and the tangible-

<sup>62</sup> B. C. Butler, *The Idea of the Church*, Baltimore and London, 1962, p. 35.

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human in Christ himself."<sup>68</sup> Unless the Church sees and reveres in every member of the human race that Christ who took human flesh that all men might be redeemed, she cannot be holy; but by the same reasoning, those whose thinking about God is founded upon loathing and hatred for that human nature which God "wonderfully formed and yet more wonderfully reformed" reject Christ and his one, universal Church. "Liberty of the spirit" is in truth an imprisonment in a darkness of the mind.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

## 7.

# THE FUNCTION OF SCHOLARS IN FORMING THE JUDGMENT OF THE CHURCH

RODERICK A. MACKENZIE, S.J.

## 1.

IN his allocution to the members of the International Congress on the Theology of Vatican II, October 2, 1966, Pope Paul VI distinguished a double function of theologians in the Church, and a double relationship to the magisterium on the one hand, and the people of God on the other. From one point of view, he said, the theologians are mediators, interpreters, a means of communication, between the magisterium and the Christian community. They communicate, interpret and apply the magisterium's teaching to the concrete situations of human life in which the community lives.

But the other function and the other relationship (which in fact the Pope put in first place) are of a more fundamental order. The theologians hold a middle place—that is, they are interpreters and communicators—between the faith of the Church and the magisterium itself. "Sacred theology has the function of studying and analyzing the truths of divine revelation, and of presenting its findings to the Christian community and in particular to the magisterium, so that through the teaching of the hierarchy of the Church these findings may enlighten

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the whole Christian people." The word I have translated "function" is *officium*, which includes the idea of duty.

In substance this doctrine is certainly traditional. Historically, in the practice of the Church, at least from the patristic period, it is thus that the ordinary teaching has been determined, and the development of dogma has proceeded. Still, the formulation is not such as one would have expected in a Roman document before Vatican II. It is post-conciliar, it strikes a note that belongs to the renewal of theology launched by the Council. It echoes some observations in the Council's *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, and it touches on an issue that has been a live and at times a painful one, especially in the last hundred years. It merits, therefore, some analysis and discussion.

The issue is wider, of course, than the relationship between theologians in the narrow sense and the magisterium, and that is why I have used the word "scholars" in my title. I should really have preferred to say "scientists," if modern usage allowed the inclusion of theologians under that honourable appellation. Biblical scholars, historians, archaeologists, are understood to be included; and the same goes in varying degrees or in some special cases for experts in the natural sciences. At times, biologists, palaeontologists, sociologists, psychologists, may have contributions to make of very great importance to the magisterium: if not directly, as expounding the truths of faith, still indirectly, as warning of the existence of new problems, which may oblige to a re-examination of traditional teachings, or of traditional ways of expressing them.

The question of "functions" in the Church, distinct from the teaching and governing office belonging to the apostles and their successors, is inseparable from the question of the gifts of the Spirit, the *charismata*, discussed at length by St. Paul. We cannot do better, therefore, than briefly recall his teaching on this subject. It comes up several times in his letters, but the *locus classicus* is I Cor. 12–14, and a reference to this will suffice for our purpose.

We must remember the special circumstances of this letter.

It is addressed to a Christian community which has existed for only a few years, and whose organization, as we would consider it, is still rudimentary. We may presume that the Apostle had chosen a group of elders, *presbyteroi*, among the Corinthian converts; but if so, they did not carry much weight nor exercise much authority. He makes no reference whatever to them in the letter, which is directed to the church as a whole. It was functioning (and, on the whole, flourishing) in a state of happy democracy, which at times verged on unhappy anarchy. What it had in abundance was the gifts of the Spirit; and we see the magisterium, in the person of the Apostle himself, intervene to check the abuse of these.

It is evident that the excesses were due to an imperfect understanding of charity in many of these new Corinthian converts. They were using the charisms to indulge their egotism and excessive individualism. At best, they valued these marvellous gifts as private experiences of contact with God, of seizure by the Spirit. At worst, they used them as means of self-glorification and displays of self-importance before their brethren. Hence their fondness for the more showy and theatrical charisms, especially the dramatic speaking in tongues.

Paul's remedy for this is to insist on the supernatural solidarity of the community and its oneness in Christ. The gifts of the Spirit are destined for the benefit of all, and not for the enjoyment or prestige of individuals. The latter must subordinate their advantage and enjoyment to the general profit and edification of the church. The presence of the Spirit makes all the believers into one Body, and it is a profanation and degradation of the Spirit's gifts to make them serve, only chiefly, the good of the individual in whom each of them is received. Paul insists that these gifts are *diakoniai*, ministries, and thus puts them into the category of service to the community as a whole.

Paul begins by considering the charismata as gifts to individuals, but then shifts to the image of the Body. This is admirably chosen to allow the Apostle to illustrate his doctrine. To live and act, the Body must exercise many various activities, and for these it needs various organs or members. Not all are of equal im-

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portance or of equal honor; but all contribute something to the Body's well-being and efficiency, all are specialized, and no one organ is capable of exercising all the activities by which the Body lives.

Therefore, each charismatic must consider that he receives his gift as member of the community, and for the benefit of the community. It is not to be considered as a privilege which redounds to his glory and chiefly benefits himself. It is for him an opportunity to serve the community. He has been given a function to perform in the Body, and the measure and criterion of that function is solely the Body's need or advantage.

This unity in one body, however, is not a simple biological or natural status. Each one's membership is a grace, granted by the action of the Spirit. It must be assented to and deliberately exercised by man's free will, illumined and impelled by the same Spirit. This brings the Apostle to speak of the foundation of all the charismata, the most excellent gift, which belongs to all without exception: the agape which reflects back on one's fellow man the love which God has exercised towards us in Christ.

Thus the Apostle puts in their right perspective and relationship the gifts of the Spirit, of which the Corinthian Christians were so proud, yet of which they had so superficial an understanding. The fundamental gift is Christian love of other men, as defined in chapter 13. The more particular gifts are to be exercised according to this criterion: what is helpful to the entire Body.

The actual list of charismata is of less importance; it is a selection and Paul could doubtless have enlarged it. It includes the activities which the Corinthians were particularly given to or which they sought after. Even so, it includes gifts which were not dependent on the motions of the Spirit on a given occasion of group excitation, but were more or less permanent public offices: in the first place the apostolate, which depended on a personal call by the risen Lord. Following that, Paul names the prophets and the teachers; the gift of government he puts in

seventh place, just before the speaking of tongues, which he is inclined to downgrade.

The setting of these Pauline instructions is obviously far different from that of any local church today. Still the principles he laid down conserve their validity. They are not limited to gifts of an ecstatic character, though obviously the latter were the ones that chiefly excited the interest, and the rivalry, of the Corinthians. As well as the apostolate, Paul expressly includes the gift of teaching, services of help, and powers of administration. The existence of such gifts would be indicated by the natural capacities of an individual, his special training or experience, and correlatively the existence of a special need in the church. Given the co-existence of those factors, Christian charity would make clear to a man that he had a charism from the Spirit, and would impel him to exercise it, not for his own glory but for the benefit of the whole Body of Christ.

In the modern Church, a list of corresponding charisms would be long indeed. The word "vocation" in English has assumed much of the value of the older word, and it rightly stresses the functional aspects of the gift. We say a vocation is *to* something, just as a charism is *for* something, and the thing is always a *diakonia*, a service to be rendered to the community. We need only refer to the innumerable forms of the social apostolate, or the apostolate of communications, or the classical "works of mercy" in their multiple contemporary aspects. There are the artistic charisms, too, that serve the Church as a worshipping community: architects, sculptors, painters, stained-glass makers, vestment makers; musicians, composers of liturgical texts, Bible-translators. All these, and many more, in proportion to their talents and skill, may have been granted charisms by the Spirit, of great importance for the needs of the present-day Church.

The same is true of the intellectuals. No doubt it would be anachronistic to look for the equivalent of Ph.D.'s or professional research scholars among the charismatics addressed by Paul. Still, when he cites "the utterance of wisdom" and "the utterance of knowledge" (*sophia* and *gnosis*), he is at least referring to gifts which are primarily an exercise of the intellect

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and understanding. Of their recipients, our theologians, historians, Biblical exegetes, and Christian scholars generally, are the legitimate successors.

### 2.

Granted then that the Spirit still distributes charisms or special vocations in the Church and for the good of the Church, to pass judgment on their exercise we must apply Paul's criterion: What function of the Body do they perform? Or, of what activity of the whole Body are they the organs?

Note that in this perspective we cannot consider one charism as subordinate or supplementary to any other. The individual charismatic remains subordinate to the authority of the magisterium, just as the charismatics of Corinth were subject to the authority of the Apostle. But the charismatic activity as such is ordained directly to the service of the Church, not only of the magisterium. To preserve the Body image the whole Church acts through them as through so many bodily organs. She does things by means of them that she cannot do by means of the magisterium.

The Church is, among other things, a thinking Body. She desires always to know, to understand, to penetrate more and more the reality which she contemplates, namely the truth revealed to her by the heavenly Father in his Son. There is no need to stress the importance of this activity, which the Church has never ceased to exercise, and never will. If at times it languishes or is impeded, then to that extent the Church is being inhibited from her full normal life and activity.

The organ of the Church's thinking, the members through whom she performs this vital activity, are her scholars, her thinkers, her intellectuals. They are those to whom the Spirit gives the charisms of research, study, scholarship, to qualify them to render the Church this service. These are specific and irreplaceable, and distinct from the charism of the magisterium.

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Individuals of course may have both. Many of the Fathers of the Church, and some of the doctors, have been bishops, sharing in the magisterium's responsibilities. But the charisms remain distinct, and what the Church does through her scholars she cannot do through the magisterium. To quote again the papal allocution:

Without the help of theology, the magisterium could certainly guard and teach the faith; but it would have great difficulty in reaching the deep and full understanding of it which it needs for the adequate fulfillment of its own function. The magisterium knows that it does not have the charism of revelation or inspiration, only that of the assistance of the Holy Spirit.

(In parentheses, I add that theologians likewise must acknowledge that their charism is not equivalent to that of revelation or inspiration; and their responsibility, though great, is not as heavy as that of the magisterium, which in the nature of things is final.)

What is said in the quotation about theologians seems to be applicable, due proportions guarded, to other scholars and scientists as well. The Church's reflection on the content of the truth made known to her is not conducted in a vacuum, or in a withdrawal from contact with the world. On the contrary, the judgments which the Church must arrive at, often painfully and gropingly, are called forth by the changing cultures in which she lives, the steady development and evolution of human thought, human sociology, human sciences. We have witnessed a massive demonstration of the process of confrontation and reflection in the recent Ecumenical Council.

If we remember the conciliar debates on religious liberty, on relations with non-Christian religions, on human love, we can see immediately how attention given to developments in the world stimulates the Church to new understanding of the challenge of the Gospel, and to re-examination of certain affirmations which used to be taken for granted, without being really justified (*Duquoc in Lumière et vie*, 71 [1965], pp. 73 f.).

It is not speculative theology in the strict sense which is the case here. When the great scholastic theologians set out to write their treatises *De Angelis*, with their long discussions of angelic modes of knowledge, of action, of communication, and the like, they were indulging in a form of speculation for speculation's sake, which could delight the contemplative mind, but had no relevance to the life of the Church. On such subjects they made no contribution to forming the judgment of the Church, for the simple reason that the Church felt no urgent problem in that area, and no necessity to formulate a judgment. It is otherwise with the problems which occupied the Council, and those which continue to arise in the world of today. They urgently require a judgment which issues in action, the finding of the Christian answer to some problem or uncertainty posed to the members of the Church by development of thought or evolution of custom or new scientific discovery in the world.

It is here that the Church's intellectuals, both theologians and others, have their proper work to do, and that work is, to use an expressive Italian word, *insostituibile*. Only they can fairly recognize the problem, pose it in all its complexity, and with a just appreciation of its gravity, its validity, the degree of certitude involved in its statement, and the like. The effort at adjustment and comprehension, the attempt at constructing a new synthesis, very often the painful reassessment of what used to be taken for granted, must also be conducted by scientific and theological discussion and debate. It is for the magisterium, finally, to decide at what point to utter its judgment: to decide when the question is ripe for a decision, and whether a new formulation or a new synthesis proposed is reconcilable with the deposit of faith, or is an adequate answer on the part of traditional belief to non-traditional questions and problems.

### 3.

We come now to the interesting question of liberty and freedom of discussion, in word and writing, on doctrinal matters. I should like to make at once the rather obvious point that abuses of

liberty do not prove that liberty is a bad thing, any more than abuses of authority prove the same about authority. In this post-conciliar time, after certain changes in the Roman Curia, and certain amendments to canon law, I believe there exists the sensation of a greater freedom of debate and expression. The Church being composed of imperfect and fallible men and women, there certainly will be abuses in the future, as there have been in the past. If in the past there have been abuses of authority, so now there will be abuses of liberty. A certain proportion of such incidents must be expected, and discounted beforehand.

But we wish to consider the normal situation, in which, we may hope, abuses will not prevail; on the contrary, greater freedom of expression will redound enormously to the benefit of the Church, particularly by improved communication between the intellectuals and the magisterium. The recent Council seems to have considered that in tensions arising between these two, the recent tendency had been to err on the side of severity, and to limit unduly the freedom which scholars require in order to be able to serve the Church according to their calling and the Church's needs. In *Gaudium et spes*, the Council had this to say:

Let it be recognized that all the faithful, clerical and lay, possess a lawful freedom of inquiry and of thought, and the freedom to express their minds humbly and courageously about those matters in which they enjoy competence (art. 62).

Some of the Council Fathers had urged that an express reference to the Galileo case be inserted at this point in the document. That was not judged necessary; but the fact shows the kind of situation the Council had in mind, and is helpful for interpreting the passage. Exaggeration and excess bring their own penalties, and in fact the Church has suffered great harm from the magisterium's condemnation of heliocentrism and the prolonged refusal to retract it. Similarly, I believe that between the two Vatican councils there has been a tendency to exaggerate, or to broaden unduly, the role of the magisterium, and that the

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Church has suffered on this account. The magisterium is an essential organ of the Church, and most of the other organs, separately, are non-essential; yet it cannot do their work—as the Pope indicated in his allocution. It should not therefore decide, without allowing for adequate discussion and examination by theologians and others, the inacceptability of new solutions or interpretations. It runs the risk of not really understanding the situation, that is, the new discoveries or theories that have given rise to new problems.

A certain hypertrophy of the magisterium's function in the Church's life may be seen in the popular application of the binomial *Ecclesia docens/Ecclesia discens*, understood not as a distinction of activities affecting the whole Church but as a hierarchic separation between groups of her members. Yet the Pope has told us that the magisterium itself, which is usually the Church teaching, in some aspects is also the Church-being-taught. One would prefer, though, to hear this expression replaced by *Ecclesia ministrans* and *Ecclesia ministrata*; the former specifying the holders of authority and of charisms, the latter the community as a whole.

Even more regrettable, perhaps, has been a tendency to apply the word "Church" to a small group of holders of authority, and to describe all others as "children" or "sons" of the Church; or to distinguish some authoritative body called "the Church" from the lower clergy and the people of God. Thus just 50 years ago, the apostolic constitution by which the code of canon law was promulgated began in this fashion:

The Church, . . . from her earliest beginnings, when at the Lord's command she began to teach and to rule all nations, undertook also to direct and control by law the way of life of the clergy and of the Christian people.

### 4.

Whatever the extent of the imbalance I have described (no doubt I have oversimplified, but hope I have not overstated it), the Council took steps to rectify it, and there seems no danger that

its prescriptions on this point will remain a dead letter. Supposing that theologians and scholars generally feel a new atmosphere of freedom in which to conduct their researches, their discussions, and their publications, we must ask next: How should they use, without abusing, this precious freedom of the sons of God?

The answer must be inevitably trite, but not the less worth expressing. I refer again to Paul's doctrine on the charisms. A charism is to be put in practice when, where, and insofar as it contributes to the building up of the Church. If indulged simply for the enjoyment of its recipient or even for his glory, regardless of the Church's advantage, that is an abuse. What the Apostle had in mind, of course, was two or three prophets or speakers of tongues on their feet at the same time and trying to out-shout one another. But there are subtler ways than that of causing ecclesiastical disorder, by intemperate indulgence in one's personal charism.

To put it positively, what is needed is a keen sense of one's responsibility to the Church, and a sensitive feeling for dialogue with one's hearers or readers. Since the Council, we have witnessed a revived and generalized interest in questions of theology, as they impinge on the life of the Church and on the life of Christians in the world. The theologian is no longer—if he ever was—the proverbial thinker in the ivory tower. If he really has something to say relevant to Christian living, if he is honestly confronting some part of Christian belief with some development of modern thought and behaviour, then people are anxious to hear him. His investigations, his discussions, and his findings will quickly be “popularized” whether by himself or by others.

We all know the harm that may follow from over-hasty or over-simplified popularization. Twenty years ago, a French Biblical scholar of high standing (a non-Catholic) proposed the hypothesis that the story of Jesus of Nazareth transmitted in the Gospels was nothing but a garbled retelling of the career of the Teacher of Righteousness, who actually was put to death two centuries earlier. No harm would have been done if the proposal had been left to the discussion of the experts, who speedily

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demonstrated its utter implausibility. Soon thereafter, its original author dropped it. But meanwhile it had become a journalistic sensation. One may doubt if by itself it destroyed anyone's faith; still to many it was a scandal and a temptation, perhaps to some an excuse to declare they could no longer accept the Christian Gospel.

One cannot, indeed one should not, refrain from seeking the truth, by hypothesis, conjecture, or plausible reconstruction, simply because some, incapable of distinguishing the essential from the accidental, are likely to be disturbed by it. Nevertheless, now that we seem to be in for a very considerable rethinking of many aspects of the faith, and much certainly is going to be interpreted differently from what was taken for granted twenty years ago, the charismatics who have the task of that laborious rethinking and examination have also the responsibility, in Paul's phrase, of seeing that "all things be done properly and in order."

The problem, I believe, is chiefly one of communication. There is no greater cause of misunderstanding—and, in this context, misunderstanding can be very harmful, even disastrous—than communication that is partial and incomplete. If an article is published, let us say, on the doctrine of purgatory, or on original sin, which presupposes a good deal of recent discussion of the doctrine, the uninitiated reader who happens on it may well get the impression that the doctrine, as he has learned it and understood it, is being simply denied. It is no use our claiming that the uninitiated ought not to be reading or hearing what they are not prepared to understand. Modern communications being what they are, and modern journalism being what it is, any subject that may be of interest to the general public gets rapid and wide diffusion. In proportion as theology has come down from the ivory tower and is dealing with questions of worship, of morals, of ecumenism, and of modern Christian life in general, it must expect to be listened to or overheard by vast numbers of Christians who are genuinely concerned about the intersection of their faith with modern living. It is plain that this is in itself something excellent and a sign of

vitality in the Church. But charismatics whose charism suddenly becomes popular and greatly in demand evidently have an increased responsibility to ensure that its practice contributes to the upbuilding of the Church.

In the present post-conciliar situation, and probably for the next twenty years or so, every theologian, in the broad sense, every worker in the fields of dogma, Scripture, moral theology, liturgy, and the like, who is seriously trying to advance his subject and to contribute to the Church's understanding of her own message, is a popularizer, whether he likes it or not. He will be quoted and misquoted, he will be misunderstood, criticized, belittled. He will have more to suffer, sometimes, from his too ardent admirers than from his opponents. All this must be expected and allowed for; and I repeat, in itself it is only the reverse aspect of a healthy and welcome situation, a stirring of the waters under the breath of the Spirit.

It is unfortunate but a fact that the difficulty in communication may affect also the scholars' contacts with the magisterium. Theologians of different traditions and different backgrounds may speak different languages—not only literally but metaphorically too. Different philosophical ways of thought may affect theological expression. One can see this in the recent discussions on the Eucharist and on the mode of the real presence of Christ's Body and Blood. I recall an article by a theologian of the Roman tradition, attached to the Vatican Curia (and so in practice, if not in theory, belonging to the magisterium), who set himself to examine, with patent goodwill and irreproachable courtesy, some writings on the subject emanating from a different theological school. He quite misunderstood them because he did not grasp their understanding of symbol. Quite obviously it had never crossed his mind that a symbol *qua* symbol could have any reality. To him it was simply a convenient fiction, a sort of poetic fallacy, but nothing more.

The solution for these and similar difficulties is more and better communication, not less. The theologian has to make clear what the problems are, and why new solutions are re-

quired. To go back once more to the papal allocution quoted at the start, theologians are to help the magisterium "by studying in their entirety modern life and civilization, and trying to understand and answer human problems that arise from the confrontation of the Christian faith with daily life, with history, with scientific investigation." We all know what an inspiring example was set by the Council itself, in its courageous and unprecedented Schema 13, which became the pastoral constitution *Gaudium et spes*.

Thus a period of great significance and importance is opening for the Church's corps of scholars. If they may expect to have more liberty than before the Council, they also have increased responsibilities. The Johannine *aggiornamento* and the Council that met to implement it have alerted the magisterium to the real danger that existed of progressively losing contact with the world which the Church intends to help. Pope John's openness effectively reversed the tendency, and went far to restore contact on the level of simple human relations. But more remains to be done in re-establishing dialogue at the scholarly and theological level.

We may say a word finally on the scholar's own work. It would indeed be superfluous and out of place to develop his obligation of honesty and integrity. However, in practical matters a judgment in this regard is not always simple. In particular circumstances of tension or divergence between scholars and the magisterium, there may arise real problems of conscience. Looking back, it is easy to be too harsh in judging certain attempts on the part of Christian theologians to justify some injudicious decrees issued by Roman congregations; attempts, that is, which claimed to be arguing not from authority but on scientific grounds. (A scripturist thinks, for example, of the decree of the Holy Office, just seventy years ago, on the authenticity of the Johannine Comma and of some of the commentaries it evoked.) At best, they were apologetic and one-sided; at worst, they became mere sophistry.

At times in the past, instructions have been sent out to the effect that a certain decision was being prepared by the Con-

gregation, and university and seminary professors were pressingly invited to write articles preparing the way, or rather, approving and urging the decision beforehand. Whatever justification may have existed for this practice in the past, I would claim that since Pope Paul's allocution it is no longer defensible, and if it occurs it ought to be resisted. I do not see that it could do honour either to the magisterium or to scholarship.

The scholar's integrity is the most precious part of the gift which he puts at the service of the Church. He must work according to the principles of his science, patiently gathering all the evidence that he can, examining and weighing it with scrupulous detachment. He must form his judgments in all honesty, remembering always that the evidence is never complete, that some margin of uncertainty remains, that his own judgment is not infallible. Humility is his second virtue: he must be ready to weigh the quite contrary judgments that may be arrived at, on the same evidence, by his colleagues; he must be prepared to modify or even reverse his conclusions when new evidence comes to light. And he must be ready, when the occasion arises, to say quite simply, "I was wrong."

Given that honesty and, of course, his real competence being supposed, the scholar has a right and duty to speak out, and in matters which concern the life and teaching of the Church to present his findings to the Church, and in particular to the magisterium. Proximately, human nature being what it is, this will not always be a path to popularity or to high ecclesiastical honours. But in the long run, he renders the Church an indispensable service, by the exercise of the charism which he alone possesses. It is thus that the Spirit intends him to contribute to the upbuilding of the Church in charity.

## 8.

# THE RENEWAL OF RELIGIOUS LIFE

J. M. R. TILLARD, O.P.

THE religious life is passing through a grave crisis. Profound unrest is invading it. Not only are its structures being questioned, but doubt is cast on its very right to exist. In North America, this crisis is particularly apparent in two ways. It is revealed first of all in the tone of the replies which the younger generation of religious make to the various questionnaires now being sent to them from all quarters. To such questions as, "Does your religious profession seem to you to be a superior way of serving men?," or "Does your life of consecration to God seem to you to be the best way of living the Gospel?," the answer is often either a question mark or a categorical *no*. Granted a certain failure to distinguish between the essence of the religious life and the often inept structures which are supposed to serve it; granted a certain impatience which obstructs the perception of all its necessary nuances; the fact remains that these responses reveal a disquieting crisis of confidence which it does no good to conceal.

Secondly, and this is the other symptom I should like to mention, the crisis is concretely revealed by a considerable increase in the number of defections. Significant is that it is often the persons most gifted and most engaged in the work of their community who are concerned. And it also happens that their decision was not provoked by the burden of celibacy or of doubts concerning their faith, but by their rediscovery of the

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meaning of the Church and their desire for a truly evangelical involvement in its service. And let us not attempt to explain this hemorrhage of departures simply by the fact that it is easier today to reshape one's life.

These are some of the symptoms which manifest a grave unrest, and which cause, especially among superiors, a certain climate of panic. This panic is aggravated, we might add, by the fact that each religious institution is required to convoke within two years from this time a special general chapter set aside for the work of renewal and adaptation of the community. Hence a high fever of commissions, consultations, inquiries, and with it the risk of taking, under pressure of a certain uncontrolled nervousness, possibly irreparable decisions which would menace the very specifying characteristics of the religious life. One gets the impression, from reading some of the pre-capitular documents, of a vast bulldozer project rather than a courageous and lucid process of rethinking, aimed not at replacing but at revitalizing, the religious life from within even if this means consenting to daring changes.

We must, therefore, enquire what, in the situation of the Church at this moment in the realization of the design of God, is the specific place of the religious life. Where does religious life today fit into the new awareness of its nature and mission which the Church has just received in the Council where God summoned her and turned her again to her vocation?

Let us begin by admitting that the religious life has rarely found itself in as unfortunate a position as today. At first sight, everything seems allied against it.

In fact, it is plain that the Second Vatican Council clearly directed the living forces of the Church toward a realistic and courageous incarnation into the values of the world. The portrait of a new kind of Christian emerges from its great documents. This Christian is a courageous man who refuses to conceive himself save in relation of true communion in the lot of his human brothers; he feels himself obliged by his faith in the Gospel to build, with all his brothers, a world worthy of men; he is not

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afraid of the risk involved in hinging his entire life on engagement to service of human tasks, because he knows that he encounters his Lord in this way. To flee from the world, to take a position of retreat before it, seems to him unthinkable from the beginning. Not only does he take very seriously his vocation as leaven in the world; but he is convinced that this leaven does not produce its effect unless it is buried in the dough.

From this perspective, the ideal vocation of the baptized Christian is clearly that of the layman. Hence the uneasiness felt by so many religious. It does no good to remind them, at least if they are brothers or nuns, that theologically they belong to the laity (which is true); the fact remains that they are conscious of not being ordinary laymen but laymen set entirely apart. Moreover, they know that what distinguishes them is precisely this dimension of realistic incarnation into the values of the world. Their belonging to the laity, then, seems to them marginal on the level of their mission, even if it is total on the level of being. And they come to ask themselves whether that element of withdrawal which is required by their religious profession is not in conflict with the impulses of the ecclesial life in their hearts.

More serious is the question posed by the world itself. Christian tradition defines the religious life (and this is a truism) by relating it to the notion of religion in the Christian mystery. But according to the law of its own evolution, humanity is now in process of passing before our very eyes out of the religious stage of its history into a new phase, the secular: One can take objection to this diagnosis (which is that of specialists), but one thing at least is certain: within the Christian churches a strong movement of criticism of religion (as opposed to faith) is being given a hearing. Let us, for a moment quickly recall the main questions haunting contemporary theological reflection.

Religion as such springs from a profound need in man, conscious of his limitations and somewhat subdued by the countless forces which ceaselessly assail him—need for security, the need for a coherent explanation of things, the need to control a certain fear in the face of the unknown, the need to find

support outside this world so wanting in fidelity, the need to give homage to one greater than himself. But very often this action of religion is ambiguous; it may only conceal a temptation to throw in the sponge. It is quite possible for a man to try to make this mysterious transcendent power responsible for things he could and should take on himself. Thus religion conceals the danger of making a man empty his very self into that Absolute to which he is related, a danger of inducing man to alienate himself, to lack courage, and to sink into lethargy rather than take charge of his own destiny as his nature as a man demands.

The progress of science and technology has enabled modern man to have a new awareness of himself. He has clearly perceived that he has within himself the resources to satisfy many of the needs which he previously asked the divine power to fulfill. Further, it seems, the more humanity enters the adult stage of its history, the more irreligious it becomes; and this is the very law of its evolution and life. Even the man who admits God's existence and omnipotence no longer necessarily sees in religious procedure (total reference to the divine, unconditional delivery of self to the God whom he adores) the best way of living out his relation to God. For the more independently he lives, the more he is conscious of accomplishing the real desire of the Creator, and so of honoring him. One may say with some truth, though no doubt exaggerated, that for the adult of tomorrow the whole religious movement will spontaneously appear as a very equivocal force, towards which his first reaction will be one of suspicion, which will thereupon have to be suppressed.

This picture should perhaps be modified. Nevertheless, it must be taken seriously to the extent that it reveals a situation which is coming to birth and growing little by little. The man of tomorrow will no longer be spontaneously religious. He will incline more towards irreligion than towards religion. So far as he remains religious, he will be tempted to expect from other rituals and collective expressions what he sought up to now from rituals of religion and the worship of God. So, he will hardly give his service to what in a strict sense, is called the

religious life in the Christian tradition. For that, at least if one is accustomed to classical definitions, is the consecration to God of the whole being and whole life of a man within a movement of religion which desires to be intense and perfect.

Has the religious life placed itself counter to the movement of humanity and of the Church? Has it not been brought into serious doubt by the *today* of God's plan? Not at all. If we understand well the authentic nature of the religious life and can show precisely where it is rooted in the Christian fact, the situation is not as gloomy as we might fear from the prognostications I have just presented.

Let us make it clear in the beginning that the word "religion" does not retain exactly the same meaning when it passes from the language of philosophy or anthropology into that of Christian theology. The Christian movement of religion, in fact, does not originate primarily in the human *need* for God (although this need is not denied), but in the *experience* of the fullness of God's love which man had in Jesus. The initiative in this case comes from God, not man. It is not primarily man who calls on God, but God who summons man and enters human existence to enlighten it with the revolutionary experience that is a creature's communion in friendship with God. In the strict sense, one can no longer speak of man seeking God, but rather of God who comes seeking man to save him, to sanctify him, to consecrate him.

With this word, "consecration," we are ushered into the religious domain—but by the expedient of divine intervention, not by way of human initiative. One is obliged here to react against the ordinary language of theologians who in speaking of the consecrated life or of religious consecration, seem to be reasoning from a serious equivocation. To speak with the rigorous precision of theology, man does not *consecrate himself* to God. On the contrary, it is God who, by faith and by baptism which seals faith, takes hold of man and marks him with the seal of fellowship in the circle of his friends, introduces him into the mysterious adoptive sonship which makes him brother of the only-begotten Son and gives him the Spirit in whom his intimacy

with the holy Trinity is completed. He is consecrated (in the strict sense of the word, the only sense here at issue), whom God has seized, on whom he has set his signet, and who henceforth belongs to God by special title.

Thus the word "consecration" in a Christian context evokes, first and essentially, the movement coming from God *towards man*, not that *from man* to God. It belongs to the plan of the coming, the free intervention of God and the Father of Jesus in the destiny of man. Further—and this eliminates one of the ambiguities in natural religion—far from implying some sort of negation of the value proper to man, this consecration signifies a promotion of it. For when God consecrates, sanctifies man (the language of sanctification is less equivocal on this level than that of consecration) he does not stop at bringing him into friendship; he fills him with the very dynamism of his *agape*. The man seized by God (consecrated) is one who must love others with a divine love. What does this mean? A love that is the transmission and realization through himself of the *agape* of God himself. God makes of his "sanctified" an active relay station to radiate into the world his mercy, his faithfulness; his tenderness, his salvation. This is far from alienation and lethargy. And there is more. Scripture shows us that through this consecration in love to God, the believer discovers the meaning of that other intervention of God as part of the same overall plan of creation. He discovers himself as the image of God in the very precise sense that, in his love, God has made him king of creation, the vicar of the Creator over the whole world, the chargé d'affaires of God. All this comes from the love of God, so it must all be actualized by putting to work the immanent powers which are, like the sacramental presence in the ontological destiny of man, of the power and dominion of God himself.

The relation of man to God is thus seen as the promotion of man by the gift of God. The Christian movement of religion here derives its proper colour. It finds its roots in the awareness which the Christian has of God's free intervention within his very being and within human history. This awareness is ex-

pressed in adoration, service, thanksgiving, confession of unworthiness; it is expressed in prayer that he may become worthy of such a mark of friendship, and in a desire to live as one who knows himself to be the beloved of God.

This is where the religious life in its technical and precise meaning comes from: the paschal event and its echo in the heart of man. It represents a maximal effort of the baptized man to foster as much as possible, in the totality of his being and his life, this seizure of himself by God, an effort so to live that his baptismal consecration will spread through his consciousness and his activity to such an extent that nothing is more determinant in his life. The problem is to assure that the intervention of God, engraved by baptism in the deepest heart of his being, rises more and more towards the surface of his existence, and becomes concretely, vitally, the single centre of his conscious, free life. In short, we are confronted with the effort of bringing to the upper level of man's free and responsible acts what God himself has already accomplished at the basic and root level of his being. It is an effort of obedience, to be sure, but of obedience to what is most primary and profound: the paschal character within the heart.

This is the attitude of the *Ebed Yahweh*, the mysterious Servant of God, the figure of Jesus. Moreover, it should be remarked in passing, the religious has always been motivated more by the desire for the *sequela Christi* than for the holocaust of self.

In fact, the religious intends by his vows to put himself in an evangelical state which allows him the radical and absolute availability of a servant of the divine desire engraved in him by the baptismal event. This is why in the old texts *religiosus* and *religiosa* are often used as parallels for *servus Dei* and *ancilla Domini*. Certainly, like all the baptized, the religious feels himself impelled by the Spirit to engage in the structures of creation so that the fullness of the kingdom will be realized there. But he further desires—and this is what distinguishes him—to centre his efforts on the precise point of contact between this divine will and his own human being. Before turning outward to radiate

the mystery of his sanctification, he turns intensely inward to expand somehow this baptismal presence of the friendship of God and the Father of Jesus Christ. While he is spreading his baptismal life to others, he tries never to leave this climate of presence. When he has accomplished his apostolic work, he returns to this presence with thanksgiving, intercession, and prayer for pardon. In a word, he desires to live in the presence of the God whom he seeks; not a vague and abstract presence (as too often denoted by the expression "living in the presence of God"), but the presence accomplished by the baptismal event, the presence of consecration and sanctification engraved in himself. For this, he renounces certain good and positive values, certain activities, certain types of human engagements which would not necessarily distract him from God (for one can find God everywhere), but might cast doubt on the intensity of his attention to God's entrance into himself. Here is neither egotism, nor refusal to serve the world. For the more he turns towards the divine centre of his existence, plunges into the reality of the event which has seized him, gives to God and the Father of Jesus an intense response of charity, the more he feels himself irresistibly urged towards others, sent outside himself to radiate the love of God and fulfill the plan of universal salvation.

But then his mission will have a special quality, the quality of a memorial (in the fine biblical sense of the word), a reminder, a sign. And this sign-memorial does not only refer to the future. Perhaps in the renewal of the theology of the religious life there has been a one-sided insistence on a single aspect of the eschatological dimension, forgetting that the religious also has the function of revealing to the world and recalling to the Church of God as a whole that, here and now, the Spirit of the risen Lord is at work, that since the event of Easter-Pentecost he comes to the encounter with men.

One may discern two indicators which allow a true characterization of this proper quality of the witness of the religious: first, that of the specific intensity of his fraternal charity, then that of his love of men and of the realities of Creation. Certainly, every layman fully engaged in the work of building the ter-

restrial city can be moved by a theogal love of the highest quality; but the fact remains that of itself, springing from the movement of profound communion with the event which we have described, the love of the religious for men and for the world ought to be marked with the same notes as the love of God for men and for the world. A love of others supported by a profound peace, a love of creation springing forth from true contact with its Source untinged by weakness and crass utility. One speaks, and rightly so, of a transfiguration of terrestrial realities by this penetrating look that is nourished by the love of God. If the religious permits himself to withdraw from certain human tasks, and if within the pilgrim Church he does not always carry out in an extreme way the call for baptismal engagement in the values of the world, it is not out of contempt, nor out of refusal to realize all his human potency. What he loses by curtailing the extension of his engagement, he hopes to gain in quality and intensity. He intends through his acts to make more tangible, more perceptible, more truly "signed," the fact that in Jesus God has entered human destiny, not to alienate man but to enable him to exceed himself in the communion of his friendship. The whole Church is both artisan and witness of this work shared by God and man for the progress of creation. It is because of this very fact that there *is* communion of God and man, that in the paschal event the *agape* of the Father *has* penetrated the heart of man, that the religious desires to be—at the heart of the people of God—both reminder and witness.

He hopes to accomplish this by hinging his whole human life on the point of connection between the baptismal event and his own existence. Every option implies a choice, every choice requires exclusions: this is the very nature of man. The religious excludes certain extensions of baptismal grace only because he chooses to emphasize the quality of the grace itself.

Permit me to add by way of parenthesis that in the renewal of structures so urgently necessary today, it is this option we must have in mind. We must try to make it at once more authentically lived and more perceptible. It is essential, on the one hand, to make the human context of the religious institution

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capable of creating the climate of peace of which we have spoken. This means we must be spared the trifling prescriptions that irritate the nerves, wear down health, sour the character, because the grace of the peace of God as a rule only radiates from a pacified human nature. But on the other hand, we must in adopting structures scrupulously avoid casting doubt on the religious option itself, with all the exclusions it calls for and with its need for—let us not be afraid to use the expression, “men set apart.” It is not a matter of leveling off religious life until it is the same as ordinary lay life, nor of distorting it into a sort of bastard life with no specifying character of its own. What purpose would it then serve but to institutionalize sheer abdication?

A second indicator shows the specific function within the Church of the religious life as sign-memorial of the entry of God into the human mystery. This indicator is the common life. Well lived, the common life is a summons to return to the faith of the Church and it lets the world know that in Jesus, God did not limit himself to the sanctification of humanity, unit by unit, individual by individual, but that he took possession of its consciousness, of its existence as community.

It is needless to insist, so evident has it become today, on the communal dimension of human destiny.

While in baptism the paschal event sanctifies the believer, it also *ipso facto* enrolls him in a community of the saved. Faith, which the rite of baptism confirms, has itself been received; the rite has only been accomplished in the Church and in the name of the Church; but the life received in baptism will only flower in union with the whole Body of Christ; the love of God will be practised through love of brothers. This should be no surprise, since the paschal event is the act by which, in Jesus, God reconciles men with himself and among themselves. The Pasch is the gathering together of men. By baptism and the Eucharist, its dynamism of unification and communion passes into the Christian. But the bond of this gathering together is not just human nature, nor the need of men for one another, nor the immanent law of spiritual action. It is the *agape* of

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God, poured into each baptized Christian by the Spirit of Jesus risen, given to all without being divided. The event around which the Christian centres his life is none other than the event around which God welds together the human race into unity.

It is understandable then, that the religious, desirous of making as explicit as possible the mark of this event in himself, lives its mystery in a fraternal community. The community is not only the atmosphere which gives him the specific means necessary for his vocation. It is above all the first sphere within which he radiates the intense communion of God's baptismal hold on him, of which we spoke above. The apostolic life, conceived as imitation of the first pentecostal community with its climate of fraternal charity, of communion in life and a single hope, of common prayer, of peace and shared joy, of constant solidarity in evangelical suffering and work, is for the religious nothing else than the re-creation of the social dimension of his life as man in Jesus; and thus it is that the power of the event invades his real situation.

Certainly, here again, every Christian lives in the Church this mystery of the re-creation of God's penetration to the heart of humanity. But he does not normally do so continuously. His engagements in the city, his social and familial obligations, do not ordinarily allow him more than the full community experience of the Sunday synaxis or assembly. He knows that he is in communion of faith, of prayer, of hope, of charity with all his brothers, but his daily tasks prevent him from experiencing this truth in such a way that the experience becomes the very thread of his existence. But by his vows and by the very specific way of life he creates, the religious places himself directly in a situation in which he will constantly experience the aspect of fraternal *koinônia* of his Christian existence. He will live both *in* brotherhood and *by* brotherhood, because he chooses to commune fully in the presence of God implanted in him at baptism. In fact, by his profession of obedience, he is not only linked to superiors, but to the community as such. He will live by it and for it. In the beautiful words of the Rule

of Augustine: "he will prefer the common good to his own particular good"; moreover, he will have nothing but what he receives from the community. For everything will be in common: the fruit of his own work will not come back to him but through the intermediary of the brotherhood, the great decisions which direct his life will be taken through the mediation of the one in charge of the brotherhood, the major rhythms of his daily life will be fixed, not by the caprices of his own will, but by the Rule which governs the life of the brotherhood. Not for motives of simple earthly convenience, but simply because the very logic of the baptismal event inspires us to it, we wish not only to be brothers, but also to live as brothers in the full realism of the expression. By means of the explicit religious community, the paschal intention of God for humanity comes to flower in the heart of the pilgrim Church in the maximal way, signified in act.

Also, more than other forms of the Christian evangelical life, the religious life has for its purpose—though in conjunction with all the other forms of Christian witness—to proclaim to the Church itself (which is often led to forget it) and the world that God has come to sanctify the great effort of the human race towards fraternal unity, and that this sanctification contributes to the effort both a new power and a salvation. For humanity united is, once God has entered human destiny, the kingdom of God, a kingdom given from above, but also one which builds itself by the generosity, the genius, and the suffering of men. The paschal event planted, in the full heart of this human striving for unity, the power of the *agape* of God. The religious community, if it lives its mystery truly, recalls two fundamental facts to men: first that God consecrated their dream of communion in Jesus, and also that for its realization there exists an infallible way, the way of the *agape* of God, which is welcomed and lived by those who say yes to the invitation he addresses to them, and of which all human love is a living reflection.

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#### THE RENEWAL OF RELIGIOUS LIFE

Does the religious life still have a place in the Church which is rediscovering its vocation of true dialogue with the world, a world in which man is more and more aware of his own powers? We answer in the affirmative without any hesitation. We even dare add that perhaps it has never been so necessary. Always on condition that it can renew itself, and by a renewal that does not erase any of its essential characteristics.

We have tried in this study to discover these essential characteristics, not from the perspective of man's religious progress but from that of the progress of faith. This means not, to repeat for the last time, that we deny or reject the former; rather, we have recognized its whole importance. The religious life (a term as equivocal as consecrated life, with which it is often replaced) is essentially a life centred on the event of the entry of God into the destiny of man by the baptismal act, itself necessarily dependent on the paschal act of death-resurrection. It wishes to be a human urge, but one totally invaded by the power of the paschal event, and therefore totally God's. The difficult and exacting human effort represented by fidelity to all the implications of the vows and of profession is an effort which in final form results in a transparency of the human heart before the paschal mark inscribed in its centre by baptism and the Eucharist. Thus it is true to speak of a *vita evangelica*, of a *sequela Christi*: human existence becomes memorial, reminder, and proclamation of the supreme act of *agape* by which, in the death-resurrection of Jesus, Christ and Lord, God "first loved us." Placed in the heart of the progress of faith, of the welcome given to the divine proposal, the kind of welcome that permits the total invasion of the paschal force, it is the *agape* of God the Father of Jesus, not the fidelity or the "religion" of men, that the religious life strives to manifest in its fullness at the surface of the pilgrim Church.

Is the religious life, then, useful to a world going through a process of secularization, a world losing its anxious dependence on God for its improvement? It is, to the extent that the world, whether it likes it or not, needs the Gospel for that improvement. It is fitting to recall here the great affirmations

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of the Constitution *Gaudium et spes* of Vatican II. The entire people of God enters the world to incarnate itself there, to collaborate actively and totally in all human enterprises that aspire towards the progress of humanity. But it must also contribute there the evangelical leaven, a leaven which saves this very progress by its effort to root out the constantly recurrent seeds of its corruption, an effort which the paschal event came precisely to inaugurate. Fully engaged, the layman, in the very name of his faith in Jesus, achieves and saves the progress of creation. The religious, by his life entirely centred on this event, proclaims and shows the *why* of this engagement.

## 9.

# THE PLACE AND FUNCTION OF RELIGIOUS LIFE IN THE CHURCH

SŒUR JEANNE D'ARC

IT is our task to consider the place of the religious life in relation to the mentality, the questions, and the demands of today's men and women. The men and women of today! These include both those who are now observing how religious men and women live (and here we find posed the problem of *witness*, and of how witness is *to be seen*), those who may possibly enter religion, or who desire to enter it but will only do so if it matches their ideal (and here is posed the whole problem of *vocations*, their first awakening and their fulfillment). And they include above all those who are even now living the religious life, men and women on whom devolves a wonderful task, but an arduous and difficult task: to accomplish in themselves the change which our age requires; and here we are at the heart of our matter, with all the problems raised by *aggiornamento*.

## THE AGGIORNAMENTO

What a wonderful task this is, because never, it seems to me, in the long history of the Church, have greater possibilities opened out before us. But what a difficult task it is too!

In the first place, this rapid mutation depends on our generation. Before our time, religious superiors did not ask themselves so many questions; they went on doing what they had always seen done. After our time, superiors of such orders and congregations as survive the change will have been formed in the perspective of that permanent *aggiornamento* which the texts of the Council insist upon, and they will be carried along with it. We are the generation that must turn the corner. And nothing has prepared us for it. Our whole formation has centred on minute observance, on respect for the rules and for the thousand customs that shackle the spirit, on fidelity understood in terms of immutably fixed standards. Nothing in all this can help us much in our present situation.

To make our task harder yet, we must turn this corner with vision obscured. No doubt the Church has placed a few very reliable landmarks for us; she shows us from afar the general direction towards which to head; but we do not see clearly the details of the route, nor the bends in this or that road which seems so promising, nor the far consequences of this or that suggested change, nor the real implications of this or that step which we are advised to take. For there is a regular shower of advice all around, from the most authoritative to the most fanciful, from the most cautious to the most hasty. This clamor of advice shows what claims people have on us, how much they need us, what importance they attach to our presence; but their contradictory counsels harass us from all sides, their suggestions push us this way and that, their remonstrances add to our perplexity. We are certainly grateful to世俗s, whether priests or laymen, for their great interest in us, and for the way they take our progress to heart. Try as we may to be receptive to their ideas, we cannot forget that it is we after all who have to pay the proverbial piper.

Confronted with these requests and these many pressures, I should like to place in the context of this congress on the theology of renewal this inquiry into, and this evolution of religious life in its major tendencies, so as to mark out the channel and indicate certain points of orientation in regard to

those elements of it which are most important or most frequently questioned. First, the *vows*: after a glance at the vow of *poverty*, I will dwell at some length on the vow of *chastity*; then, from among so many other burning questions, we will raise, at least summarily, the question of *institutions*: the kind of works, service, or apostolate to which religious give themselves.

## POVERTY

On the subject of vows, the point to which it seems I must first direct attention is the vow of poverty, in part because of its acknowledged intrinsic value, but especially because of the privileged treatment it receives. It seems to me very remarkable that in the universal upheaval of values, everything in the religious life comes into question, and sometimes in a very destructive fashion; everything, that is, except poverty. Whereas there is questioning and sometimes lively attack on the legitimacy of obedience and of chastity, on the rule and the habit, on the schedule and the cloister, on the vows and the consecration, there is no doubt that men and women in religion ought to be poor; no one brings holy poverty to trial, Lady Poverty, as Il Poverello called her. On the contrary, they insistently summon religious to be truly poor, to be ever poorer with a visible poverty that bears witness.

Here is a spiritual trend which seems to me to be the sociological outcropping in the conscience of our time of an authentic evangelical vein, even though the summons issued to religious is coloured here and there by bitterness, or by a note of unreality, or by a naive touch of romanticism. Certainly we must abstract from these accidental elements, but in doing so we must give full attention to the real, spiritual, insistent demand of our times—that it is a function of religious men and women to demonstrate before all the world that the Church is herself poor and serves the poor, that she is and must be the Church of the poor. The role of religious is to bear constant witness to the fact that the very first word in Our Lord's per-

sonal message raised poverty, despised by the world, to the rank of a beatitude.

Before this amazing agreement, the unanimity of all these echoes, the pressure of all these desires, emanating from all quarters, and wonderfully harmonious with the Gospel, poverty is the first step we must take, with wisdom but without hesitation, with prudence and cheerfulness, a step that is sure and beyond dispute.

## WORK AND SHARING

The course is clearly laid out: poverty, both personal and collective, has got to be *effective*, and in today's world this involves two essential notes, work and sharing. First, *work*. Bread earned by the sweat of one's brow, by which the community, its works, and some who are poorer, may live. This is the first requirement of a true poverty, and one which men of today understand best. While in the Middle Ages, for example, the world was perhaps more sensitive to a poverty whose visible expression was mendicancy, today begging no longer edifies anyone. In our civilization and our kind of economy, humble and realistic submission to the common law of work is one of the most authentic witnesses of a poverty without deceit.

The same goes for *sharing*. If religious acquire money, let them avoid at all cost the anti-witness on which the Council was so vehement: every appearance of luxury, of excessive wealth, and accumulation of possessions. But as soon as they have enough to live on, let them share with those in need, the poorest first. Let them bear in mind all the needs of the world and of the Church, and let them think also of other communities—there are so many of those which cannot support themselves on their purely apostolic and missionary activities!

Sharing is not limited to money, or the products of work. It extends also to those gardens, estates, libraries, those large, commodious buildings which are so frequently the appanages of great communities—the best way for religious to use these

possessions like poor men is probably not, in most cases, to liquidate them, but rather, whenever it is possible to do so, even at some inconvenience, to find a way to share them, to open the gates, to offer the use of these places, at least at certain times, to certain groups or persons, as a simple welcome and brotherly gesture, so spontaneous among those who are poor of heart. Thus, even though the witness of poverty cannot always be visible at first glance (since frequently it depends not on us, but on the very necessity of the works and services we perform), it will always be perceptible as a spiritual quality, and the perfume of the beatitudes. As we have said, all voices concur on this point, whether of the Church or of the world, drawing us ever more fully into the path traced out by the Gospel.

In the case of the other basic elements of the religious life, the situation is different, because for them contemporary tendencies are running counter both to traditional assumptions and to the actualities of the moment. First, take *obedience*. How it is censured! It is called a flight from responsibilities, a fear of initiative; it makes subordinates into infantile beings, destitute of personality; it annihilates liberty and at the same time hardens the authoritarianism of superiors; it smothers the Spirit, it creates a deleterious environment. In short, it is at once anti-human and anti-evangelical.

## CHASTITY

But these attacks are nothing alongside the groundswell that shakes the *vow of chastity*, that rock, that essential foundation of the religious life. This most fundamental point, which has survived through all the Christian centuries since the first consecrated virgins, —not it is true without some query, but without ever being really debated among the faithful—is now handed over to radical questioning. In the end, we hope, this will be for the best, will make for a better understanding of chastity and a better way of living it; reflection stimulated by criticism

ought to lead religious to a more profound spiritual understanding of the vow and a clearer perception of the conditions necessary for its complete fulfillment. And this light will reflect on all the connected questions: priestly celibacy, fidelity in marriage, continence, virginity.

For a clear understanding of the problem, it is necessary to discern the causes of such a lively dispute on all levels without evading the difficulties: its causes in the historical order, the sociological, the psychological, and the theological as well. This crisis must be placed in the whole background of the modern world, and also in the evolution of theology and of Christian spirituality.

From the first look at the modern world, one fact leaps before the eyes: the erotic note, spreading and obtruding everywhere, one of the disturbing aspects of Western civilization as a whole. A good test is supplied by advertising: if it is a question of trying to sell a pot, the display is likely to concentrate more on the charms of a seductive beauty who presents the pot than on its objective advantages, gastronomical, economical, or practical. This obsessive erotic colouring obviously creates an atmosphere very unfavorable to the birth of religious vocations and—what is the same thing, or nearly the same—a milieu in which the value of the vow of chastity is obscured.

But this aspect of the problem is still quite superficial, because it is extrinsic to Christianity. It seems to me that we must go much deeper and detect the root of the trouble on the plane of theology itself: the crisis of chastity, sacerdotal or religious (like the crisis in vocations itself), arises at the level of the change of sign in the theology of terrestrial realities, itself conditioned by a *shift of accent in the perception of the paschal mystery*.

### THE PASCHAL MYSTERY

The paschal mystery is indissolubly a mystery of the cross and of glory, of passion and resurrection. One absolutely must maintain both facets if one wishes to be faithful to the whole Christian

heritage. It may be acknowledged that, rather than this difficult fidelity to the mystery in its entirety, under its double aspect of night and light, of suffering and triumph, there has been in Christian theology and spirituality rather an oscillation, an excessive polarization, sometimes to one facet, sometimes to the other.

At one time, the centre was more the cross than the glory; the customary way of the cross, for example, was complete at the sepulchre, forgetting the resurrection. For centuries there was the astounding omission, for all practical purposes, of the very liturgy of Easter, celebrated almost secretly on Saturday morning. The people of God thus saw itself offered a spirituality centred exclusively on the cross. Under these conditions, religious and priestly spirituality, with all it implies of severance and renunciation, was in continuity with that of the people as a whole. The commitments proper to these states of life were in line with the common Christian conception, carried to its limited ideal.

### THEOLOGY OF EARTHLY REALITIES

In the same line, the theology of earthly realities was generally dominated by a certain pessimism: "the world" and all the aspects of life in the world, were habitually devaluated, perceived in all their possibilities for evil and danger; the accent was placed on the sinful character of the earthly. Accordingly, to "work out one's salvation," it was necessary to flee this evil world, and it was this consciousness of the value of severance from contact with all temporal things that formed the background of every religious vocation.

This orientation was notable in the theology of marriage, which for a very long time could almost be summed up in St. Paul's dictum, "let them marry, for it is better to marry than to burn," supplemented with certain moral rules, often very materialistic, especially in regard to procreation. And now, within mere decades, a whole positive spirituality of marriage has been elaborated, a constructive reflection upon the love

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between spouses, a conscious, marvelling apprehension of the reality of the sacrament and the holiness of the conjugal state—an evolution ratified and crowned by the texts of the Council.

But this causes a profound change in the very components of the choice of the religious life and the meaning of the vow of chastity. This is obviously somewhat simplified, but one may say that in the older perspective, it was almost a matter of answering yes or no to the Lord and his request. It was a choice between black and white, between the "works of the flesh" and "the angelic life," between inevitable contamination and absolute purity, between a profane, unconsecrated life and a consecrated one.

Now that one can, with some justification, more accurately isolate the authentic and positive values contained in terrestrial realities, and notably in Christian marriage, they become charged with a meaning that is attractive, and attractive on the spiritual plane. We know Christians who marry with extremely high spiritual objectives and who live their reciprocal love in the grace of the sacrament, with magnificent purity and generosity. In these circumstances, it is easy to understand how profoundly one can question the value of a vow of chastity, of the choice of religious or priestly celibacy. One may well ask: if all these realities, with all their potential for spirituality, are so valuable, why renounce them? How can the renunciation be a good thing, or a better thing? We are taught the consecration of all who are baptized, the holiness of spouses, conjugal spirituality; why seek further? Why seek in religious life some other consecration, some "state of perfection," or some particularized spirituality?

Let us admit what was obvious in the Council and may easily be seen in the texts, that the theology of the religious life has become a sort of afterthought of small interest to true theologians. It has not progressed at the same pace as the theology of the Church. It has not been able to adjust itself entirely to a better theology of terrestrial realities. It has still not completely assimilated all the advances of Christian reflection on the world as God's creation, on the people of God,

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on baptism and its consecration, on the laity, and so on. It has not even fully integrated the renewal of the paschal mystery.

It was built, in an over-simplified if coherent manner on a scheme of opposition and severance; consequently, in the face of the lights that are rising in the area hitherto relegated to darkness, it is a bit disoriented. One would say that its task now is to discover a justification of the religious life; some religious are themselves asking where its *raison d'être*, the source of its consistency, lies. This is the basic cause of many departures; those who no longer know the reason for their way of life are very close to abandoning it.

## THE DEMANDS OF LOVE

It is not in an opposition to the world, it seems to me, that the foundation of the religious life is to be found, nor its centre of gravity; it is in love: in love's demands and in love's absolutes. Here we are at the heart of the vow of chastity. If the religious leaves the realities of this world, it is not because they are evil; if he refuses marriage, it is not because he undervalues the grace of the sacrament, but because Christ has personally invited him, "if you will. . . ." It was his call he heard one day, his counsel, the counsel of a friend to take the quickest road, the most independent, the most unencumbered road for love's journey. In the priceless words of *Lumen gentium* (art. 44), it is the entrance into a "more intimate consecration": this is the explanation of it all.

There is an extremely basic movement of love in this need to leave everything in order to follow the beloved in this unique and all-absorbing demand, in this note which in excluding implies no scorn for others but is simply the quest for the absolute in love. To make a comparison: when a newly-married couple leave on their wedding trip, it is not because they find the company of their friends bad, or because they do not love their families, but because they desire the intimacy of the "you and I," the unique presence of one with the other. There is in

this human love some risk of narrowness, of a sort of "egoism of the couple"; but in the more intimate love of the Lord, the heart necessarily opens to the love of all one's brothers.

And it is here that a better theology, a better catechism, a better presentation of the religious life can be infinitely fruitful: at the root of the vow of chastity is simply the necessity to love, to seek greater intimacy with the Lord, to reserve oneself entirely for him, and to adopt means favouring this more intimate gift. This whole order of means in the religious life is thus organized around the unique centre of love as lived within the vow of chastity.

### THE PLACE OF THE ASCETIC

We must not believe that this perspective of love involves any compromise. If the religious life is the *sequela Christi*, it can only find its centre of gravity in conformity with the paschal mystery in its entirety, bringing us "by his passion and cross to the glory of his resurrection," as the Angelus prayer says.

The resurrection is unintelligible without death. Glory has no meaning except through the cross. We must be careful not to let the theology of the religious life become, like diseased novelty, a game of see-saw, conforming to the taste of the times and allowing itself to be taken in tow by those who, on discovering at last the triumph of Easter, run the risk of rejecting the cross of Christ. If we try to organize the religious life around ease and euphoria, its total degeneration will not long be delayed. Whoever seeks fulfillment in this kind of thing will surely fail. The vow of chastity is a fine expression of the fulness of our love for Our Lord, and it promotes that love. But it is necessarily accompanied by some frustration, a fasting in the realm of the affections which every religious has to practise fully all through life. Mysticism cannot long be economical about its asceticism without cracking up entirely.

In placing all these elements in perspective, therefore, our task is to rethink everything in terms of love only, of the love

which we express by the vow of chastity and which is inseparable from the love of the Lord, the Lord crucified and risen, and of our neighbor.

It is by this touchstone alone that we must test, choose, and set in order all the rest, everything the centuries have accumulated in this dear old house of the religious life. To sort out this whole heritage—and it indeed includes valuable things—with respect and delicacy, but with a rigorous sense of what we call nowadays “functional housekeeping.” Whatever serves love is good. Good too is whatever helps us love God and our brothers, especially those of our own community, and also those outside, whom we have to approach and serve. Whatever creates an obstacle to love, paralyzes it, or dries it up, is to be proscribed.

## LOVE AND SEXUALITY

We cannot sort out all these elements and put them into order judiciously unless we take very careful note of everything that the progress of psychology has taught us about love and sexuality. During the last half-century there has been in this field a real revolution, vitally important, irreversible, and sound in principle, which has profoundly modified the contemporary mentality. From the most cogent discoveries of psychology and physiology, we have learned that sexuality has a much wider domain than was once believed. Sexuality marks the whole body and soul. Some biologists affirm that all the tissues of our bodies, the smallest pieces of muscle or skin, bear the imprint of our sexuality, and are really different according to whether they are a man's or a woman's. If this is true of our cells, how much more of our entire personality! We now know that sexuality is one of its fundamental and constitutive elements. Far from being confined to those relations called sexual, sexuality colours all our feelings and, consequently, all our relations to others and to ourselves. In other words, we are not “human beings” on whom the adjective “masculine” or “feminine” has been grafted; we are, in all our being, either Man or Woman.

This perspective seems to me to give a new dimension and a greater value to the vow of chastity, and to the definitive commitment of the consecrated celibate. The commitment, rather than being a mere prohibition placed on a certain type of relation, or the reservation of a small corner of our being, is, we now see better than before, the consecration of the whole of ourselves, of our entire personality, of all our affectivity, to a single Love. This is why, moreover,—although I cannot develop this aspect here—the vow of chastity takes a quite different meaning for a man than for a woman, and the more different as the manner of being man or woman varies according to civilization, family structure, and cultural milieu. And we are at the present witnessing the phenomenon of the “promotion of woman” which entails great changes in the way of being woman, whether in the world or in the religious life.

In any case, for a woman to take the vow of chastity is to seek to achieve her femininity in the spiritual love of Christ and his brothers; and to achieve it fully but in a different way, obviously, than marriage. In our day, this supposes, first, that each religious and the whole community be quite clear about such things, and that they fully accept these realities we have been talking about; it supposes, secondly, that every means be used, taking into account the “promotion of woman,” for the *assumption of a femininity* truly expanded in giving and loving.

### THE SOLE CRITERION

Love thus expressed in the vow of chastity as a mark of the entire being should, then, be the *sole criterion* by which all elements of the religious life will be realigned and remodelled.

First, all the stages of formation: the age of the aspirants, their qualifications and maturity; the postulancy and novitiate, their style and duration; the atmosphere of (or even the existence of) the juniorate; the examination before entrance; the studies of the professed, their programme, methods, etc. In brief, all the levels of preparation ought to be reconsidered

with one end in view: to form religious who are adults, who are capable and equipped both to give and to be given.

Likewise, all that comes into play in *the fraternal life* ought to be ordered towards the expansion of love of authentic friendship; all which concerns the relations among the brothers or sisters of the same community: the silence, gatherings, recreations, chapters, assemblies, common prayer, the style of the refectory, of the cells or dormitories, the schedule, the many details—all the laws and customs which regulate the relations within a house, a monastery, or a congregation.

Likewise, the relations with superiors and the whole question of obedience: it is from this point of view that one can surely understand one's style better, and at the same time see the answer to the objections we have been raising. Religious obedience runs the risk of "infantilizing" with infantile persons. It will not avoid deterioration and loss of meaning unless it is located in the climate of a community that is fraternal and adult. The permanent interrelation which makes all the members open to and reliant on each other finds concrete form in the relation of each and of all with the superior, assuring a fund of confidence and reciprocal correction which allows obedience to bear its fruits. Dialogue in the living body of the community plays a role analogous to the sensory nerves of an organism: keeping the head constantly informed of what is happening in the extremities, so that the command of the motor nerves, which determines movement, is always released with full knowledge of the matter at hand, and in a living connection with the sensations and reflexes of the members.

### SIGN IN THE WORLD

To return to the sound fulfilment of our affective capacities in chastity, we must again review all the norms of our relations with the outside world in this light: our works, our apostolate or service, all the occasions of our contact, our conversations,

the receiving and paying visits, our outings, vacations, etc. Thus our chastity will truly be a sign in the world: the true test of chastity in vows is surely the quality of our giving, the openness to our brothers, our readiness to welcome, and our capacity for disinterested friendship.

For if one considers chastity in its aspect of abstention, there is no witness. First, it is impossible to prove that it exists; second, its signification is ambivalent—fear or contempt, neurosis or angelism. Abstention in itself, pure and simple, does not represent a value; it will be an anti-witness if it results in creating, with their virginity intact, little old children or viragos. Chastity is a sign *in its fruits*, when it is fully assumed in a mature, open, transparent femininity that is a source of peace.

Sign and witness of Christ uniquely loved! Sign of a love that radiates to our brothers! Sign also, and a kind of proof before all Christian people and the world that the centre of being is in the spiritual: sign, proof, evidence that it is not necessarily the conjugal act which fulfills personal maturity, but the full assumption of one's sexuality in all its affective dimension and its capacity for love and giving.

In the religious life, the vow of chastity which consecrated celibacy is absolutely fundamental, constituting the very basis of that life, so partaking of its substance that one cannot conceive it without this dimension. The religious life has been able to exist, and can still now be realized without the vow of poverty (witness the first consecrated virgins) and without the vow of obedience (witness the hermits), but its very existence depends on the vow of chastity which expresses the full gift of love.

The situation is quite different for the priesthood, which is essentially a serving of the people of God. For the priesthood, celibacy is a favorable condition in perfect harmony with its end. It makes service “easier,” the priest is “freer,” “more available” (these are the expressions of the *Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests*, art. 16, and the encyclical *Sacerdotalis Caelibatus*), and there are other conveniences too which are well understood and which show, on the one hand, a certain proximity between the priesthood and the religious life, for both are lives devoted to the coming of the Kingdom, and on the

other, certain historical contacts more numerous as monks and religious in the West began to receive the priesthood. Conveniences, proximity, contact, favorable conditions: all these argue for priestly celibacy, and serve to mark out clearly the difference between it and the religious life.

But here also, as for the laity and for better reason, the presence and fraternal help of religious, who have assumed chastity as a fundamental obligation, may be of assistance to secular priests, perhaps to furnish them where possible with a sort of example for the organization of conditions in which the integration of the affective capacities may be made easier, for example, in terms of priests, a style of fraternal life . . . But more than anything else, what can help is the global presence and the very fact of the religious life in the Church.

## SERVICE AND INSTITUTION

Having tried to show in what direction the doctrine of vows may develop to assure a harmonious evolution of the religious life, one might take each mechanism and specify its function and importance in the new equilibrium, or rather in the renewed equilibrium. But this would be an endless study. Rather than delve into details here, it seems preferable to me to take up very briefly the question of the value of the *services* rendered by religious, works of mercy, apostolic activities, and of the *institutions* which surround and sustain this considerable charitable activity.

On the one hand, everything that is institutionalized is under heavy attack in the Church today. On the other hand, it is true that there is a kind of uneasiness, unhappy questioning among religious themselves about the real usefulness and timeliness of the services in which they spend their life.

For some the question does not arise. Contemplatives are devoted to the single office of praise and love of God alone. But the others, all the religious who are called "active," have obeyed the word of the Lord, "what you do for the least of these . . ." And they devote themselves to the service of those with whom

Christ identified himself. But immediately arises the question which the teacher of the law asked: Who is my neighbor? Among innumerable brothers, whom should one serve by priority? And what do they need? What can one best do for them? What can one best bring them?

God is so good there can be nothing better. The highest good is that they should know you, you and him whom you have brought, Jesus Christ. No gift is as valuable as knowledge and love of the Lord. Then, surrounding that gift and supplementing it, there are all the other good things, everything that helps a man to become a better image of God, everything that can serve the development of the person and society: the goods of the spirit, training and education; the goods of the body, food, nursing, clothing, housing; and the goods too of the whole social environment.

It is good to have in mind an objective scale of values. But charity is first of all attentive to the immediate needs of the other. Here the order is often reversed: primacy is given to the most urgent, to the greatest suffering; it is necessary to help poverty, hunger, cold, nakedness, sickness, before anything else. An empty stomach has no ears and the preaching of the Gospel seems a mockery before those who are hungry. So the concrete witness of the charity of Christ comes first. It opens hearts to the love of his mystery and the knowledge of his name.

When we try to measure either the utility of a religious work or the services rendered by charitable and apostolic activities, we should always keep in mind two distinct scales: the *scale of values* and the *scale of urgencies*.

### THE MOST USEFUL

In other words, I would pose the question in this way: given the number of all the religious in the world, is all this power really being used in the way that is best for the kingdom? It is said (and this is another problem: one should look into it more closely) that there is a need for vocations. But let us ask ourselves what we are doing with the vocations we have. Are the

religious, men and women, really distributed so as to apply their work where it is *most useful*? Are they devoted to the *most urgent* need? And if not the most urgent, to the *most essential*? Is their action directed to those who need them most? In situations where it is the most effective? Does their action touch those who are most deprived, and also those who could diffuse it more widely? In the face of the small number of workers and the immense needs of the world, the grave question of greater usefulness becomes heartbreaking. And this is quite frequently the reason for that latent unrest, for that discouragement among some religious who with admirable generosity have thrown their lives into some work, but who now wonder whether that work truly deserves to be characterized as *most useful*.

The needs of the world change quickly, while the modes of our activity endure, crystallize, and become established. Is our charity attentive enough to the need for maintaining our services always in the order of the greatest usefulness here and now?

These questions, seriously posed, can have the effect of a charge of dynamite. They could well shatter certain institutions, those which continue to function on acquired momentum, or on machinery set up centuries ago. Let us not resort to dynamite, but let us all, religious and laymen, priests and bishops, agree to raise these questions, face them squarely, but calmly and with a clear head, in total liberty before the urgent demands of the kingdom. Let our questioning go deep enough to discover better where the burden is that our love should carry, where the need of the world is, and where the wind of Pentecost, which animates the Church, is carrying us. Let us also be ready for great internal changes if they show themselves necessary, and to maintain the institutions and the works that ought to be maintained, however great the burden.

### NEW FORMS

Let us be versatile enough to create "new forms," if the Spirit one day calls on us to do so: new forms of works, of service, of involvement in the structures of society, avoiding

wasteful duplication and rivalry, and looking always to the most necessary, the most urgent tasks, for the better deployment of the powers of a greater love. New forms, or renewed forms, of the apostolate, of presence in the world, of openness, of witness, of contact. New forms of catechetics, of preaching, of missions, of dialogue with all, believers and unbelievers. New forms, or a new style in the religious structures themselves, to relieve them of excess burdens and bring them closer to the essential work, ever more tightly bound to service and at the same time freer, so that they favor a more complete openness to love.

Are there perhaps even new forms of exploration more attentive to the evangelical counsels? The discovery of the Gospel is never finished. A tradition which has been eight centuries crystallizing has established three vows of religion by which one may come to a little better correspondence with certain teachings of Christ. But they are far from embodying the Sermon on the Mount, or even the beatitudes, and certain experiments are under way which strive to express better some of the dominant notes of the Gospel. A certain community proposes for itself a vow of "mansuetude," and in fact, meekness seems to be an evangelical value at least as important as obedience. The attempt can well be made to conform more closely to the counsels of the Lord, to remodel oneself better along the essential lines of the beatitudes—and under vow, why not? To speak the truth and "to do the truth" as St. John says—justice—to preach the Gospel to the poor—what endless prospects this opens up!

In this springtime of the Church, the sap is rising everywhere. Especially in this privileged branch that is the religious life are new shoots sprouting forth. And we assist, full of wonder, in the renewal, knowing that it will bear fruit; we try to collaborate with all our strength, to discern its mainstream, and even to sketch out its theology. But the theologian is not a prophet, and no one can know yet which buds will open, and what they will yield in flowers and fruits.

## 10.

### THE PRIEST OF TOMORROW

GABRIEL CARDINAL GARRONE

THE question has become a commonplace, so commonplace that it almost seems a slogan.

It is less a question raised by things as they are than an effort to satisfy the ardent and pressing expectations of the priests themselves, whose unrest it sums up.

But when one is about to give, or attempt to give, the beginnings of an answer, one finds that there is room for queries about the question itself. It only seems clear. A certain way of going about its solution can put one out of the way of discovering it. And so I should like to dwell less upon the solution, complex as a matter of fact and somewhat fanciful, than on the question itself. A question well asked is already half answered; a question badly asked has no chance of being answered.

It seems particularly necessary and urgent, if one would define or describe the priest of tomorrow, to remind oneself that he will never be defined except in terms of the priest of all time. In this area, as much and more than any other, to reject "essences" is to renounce all authentic reflection. In this case, it is to deny all tradition, and finally the stability of revelation itself. This does not at all mean that one can avoid considering "existential conditions": they are an authentic element of reality, and one cannot disregard them without failing in fidelity to the God of truth. The lesson of the Council is plain here: it

matches the *Constitution on the Church* with a *Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*.

The priest of tomorrow cannot be defined unless we look at him from afar in proper perspective. The intellect, if it is to advance, needs this withdrawal because its impulse comes from within. It is within itself that it finds the "power to go farther" which Malebranche has called the characteristic of the spirit. When the question is to discover what the priest is or ought to be, this withdrawal takes place within faith. The intellect turns within itself to listen to God in the peculiar and mysterious attitude which grace allows. God has spoken, and his Word continues to resound in our ears through the Church and in the very form required by our problems and our needs. Christ is "with us until the end of time." The Council which has just concluded is one more of those extraordinary manifestations of the Spirit, of the soul of the Church, constantly restoring and "recalling what Christ has said" to man's inmost awareness at every single moment of his history.

What ought the priest of tomorrow be? I should like to try to say why and how the question is asked, and then in what direction one may hope to find a solution—one that is satisfying, of course, but above all one that is authentic. Why is this question asked today? What has the recent Council contributed towards its solution? How, finally, should we ask the question in order effectively to solve it?

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How has the question of the "priest of tomorrow" arisen? Why is it so sharply urged? This must be asked, because for centuries no one has dreamed of expressing in these terms the line of research to be pursued into the deeper understanding of priestly existence. To scrutinize the sources of revelation, examine tradition, finally and consequently to return to the past: such has been the instinctive law of inquiry. Today it is towards the future that we turn. The priest is engaged, like all men of our time, in a course that does not permit him to turn back. The machine is going so fast that there is but one inescapable thing

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to do, to strain forward and to cast along the road ahead, in the words of Gaston Berger, ever more powerful headlight beams as the speed increases.

Still, one would not have a complete view of the problem which is posed today in these new terms if one remembered only the needs experienced as part of the general malaise and unrest. One must also acknowledge a certain intractability on the part of theology to face up to them. It is all the easier to make such acknowledgement in that the progress brought about in the Second Vatican Council included, even as it sought to rectify it, a recognition of this deficiency.

The pastoral malaise has become through the years, and particularly since the last war, the subject of so many treatises that we need not delay over it. Priests have become suddenly conscious of the extraordinary changes affecting the world. It was forced upon their attention first by the brand-new problems born of the appearance of a working class alien to the Church and of the massive phenomenon of urbanization. Priests of rural areas have been long caught in a sort of general stagnation quite capable of fostering illusions. Now, however, the barriers are down, and the same problems are common to all. The frontier has become blurred as the structure of rural life has become industrialized. And already, what with the more or less permanent movement of its people to the cities, it is part and parcel of urban life. Rural life has entered the great movement of the world in evolution. In this situation, the balance has been destroyed, tranquil assurance has gone. The problem of the priest is all around. For a time, one could keep a few illusions, give in here or there to the temptation of "mirage of the past," of the return to traditional peace and order, idealized by the present difficulties. From now on we have left the dream behind. Life has been definitely transformed, structures have collapsed, and the priest frequently discovers himself an outsider and a stranger to this new existence. The least pastoral problem, even the most elementary—think only of Sunday—are raised in brand-new terms: the difficulty is not only to resolve them, but to enunciate them. Yet it is already possible to discern some traits of the new

human condition, in which the faith of men and the pastorate of priests ought to find the means of rebuilding themselves. One notes immediately an extraordinary expansion taking place in the lives of all men: expansion by way of an imagination that is fed to saturation by the media of communications; expansion of thought, supercharged with a surfeit of quasi-immediate information, hurtling him beyond old horizons and throwing him into instant contact with the entire universe; expansion also by geographical and space travel extending the radius of his existence farther and farther away.

Expansion also includes a mobility multiplied by temporal rhythms: daily, from bedroom to factory; weekly, from job to weekend; yearly, from the humdrum of life to the fleeting weeks of vacation. Men, so fashioned by present-day life, deprived for the most part of true relaxation and real peace, are almost impossible to get hold of. And the evolution at work is integrating them into ever more numerous social groups that are constantly becoming more complex.

The pastoral office is not without its response, at least in outline, to these new conditions. And it might conceivably be enough to recount all the really new and topical things which awareness of this state of affairs (an awareness deriving from the collective sense of responsibility of priests or from the apostolic capacities of the laity) brings to this situation. But the psychology of the priest is profoundly marked by the shocks of these sudden changes. True solutions do not yield spectacular fruits; they are even slow to produce authentic ones. And the times we live in inflict bitter torture on souls. The priest laboriously seeks a way out, a sort of law of life in this world, so different from yesterday's. Certain words are habitually used to translate these aspirations, these requests, indeed, these requirements. The word solitude or loneliness is most commonly used as a primary expression, summary but exact, of this state of mind. The escapes from this solitude are manifold: dialogue, contacts, participation; the search for mutual exchange, the need to encounter men and things effectively in reality; confrontation with responsible people in order to be able to find at their level a new

understanding of the problems in which the pastoral life is engaged.

These appeals of all kinds are really so many signs by which realities attract our attention. Before their transmission into the consciousness of priests, they bespeak a new, badly controlled situation. Their true name is, in the last analysis, grace, because provided they are seriously and correctly interpreted, they ought to make it possible to face up to things. There is as much danger in disregarding them as in yielding oneself to them without sufficient reflection.

The Church and her theology have had to confront this sudden mutation and to make note of this shock without being perfectly prepared for it.

It is not that the theology of the priesthood was a poor theology. We have only to think of the extraordinary spiritual explosion which followed the Council of Trent. The men of that generation, supported by the spiritual thrust of the Council, enriched Christian thought with magnificent expositions and "sublime" investigations of the theology of the priesthood. The priest, "religious of God," man of the Eucharist . . . The Church and priests through their educators have not finished gathering in the treasure of these analyses and of this tradition, which have in so many ways, direct and indirect, grounded and nourished priestly formation.

Is this to say that the priesthood, thus solidly linked to its source, has found itself capable of responding immediately to the problems posed today? It seems not. Something remained to be done, but just what is difficult to determine. The theology of the priesthood suffered from the absence above and below it of complementary theologies which it needed to be able effectively to find its own place in today's world. On the one hand, there was no theology of the episcopate, or almost none. On the other, there was even less of a theology of the laity. There resulted, perhaps without our realizing it, a sort of idealization of the priest's priesthood, in the sense that only its vertical dependence was established, without there being full reassurance about its horizontal attachments. The priest lived a sort of

"theological solitude" which ended by being an abstraction. The recent Council did for him what it did for the whole mystery of the Church, particularly through the rehabilitation of the idea of the people of God: it made the priesthood of the priest descend again from heaven to earth. It reintegrated it within the living, historical Church, present in the midst of men, gave it continuity with the entrance into the world and the insertion into history of the Word made Flesh and of Christ founding his Church. So the Council, by bringing the priest out of his theological isolation, laid the first and principal foundation which he needed if he was to cope with the life and suffering which he was presently enduring in the name of solitude.

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The first link the Council had to forge was that of the episcopate. The fact is that this link was lacking. The episcopate was lived rather than theologically constructed. The First Vatican Council had firmly established the theology of the primacy of the successor of Peter, but had left a breach here. We know through what often laborious discussions, and at what a price, in often very difficult confrontations, the equilibrium has been re-established, contributing, in the *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* a strong, clear view of what a bishop is. This new theology of the bishop had first to probe into the sources of the episcopal office and of the reality as actively lived in the Church. It had then to emphasize and clearly confirm, with what one might call the sacramentality of the episcopate, the collegial reality of the body of bishops around the successor of Peter, their leader. There is no call here for any detailed recounting of the research undertaken nor even of the conciliar conclusions reached. It is enough to recall how the episcopal grace comes, through the apostles, from the Lord's own will. This grace is a reality and a power. It is above all a spiritual power diversely expressed in juridical modes which ought always to reflect the basic spiritual character. This episcopal grace, one should recall, is the important one whereby the episcopal body con-

tinues the apostolic college and bears the permanent and immense responsibility of the salvation of the whole world.

Some have been led to think, by a somewhat superficial reading of the Constitution, that priests and the priesthood were passed by. The texts dealing with them do in fact appear to be few and brief by comparison with those elaborating matters of special concern to the bishop, or even to the laity. In reality, the priesthood of the priest had in theological tradition been the subject of enough treatises that the Council had no call to delay over it to the disadvantage of the already neglected areas of the episcopate and the laity. Besides which, both these areas posed very grave theological questions which could not be handled with other than precise and positive statements. One of the most delicate of these questions was the welding together of bishops and pope; another was the confirming of the priesthood of the faithful without prejudice to the ministerial priesthood. It is a mistake, however, to measure the seriousness of the Council's consideration by the number of lines it devoted to the priest. The Council always responded to true needs. It tied up the theology of the priesthood already formed with the theology of the episcopate which it was in process of making. Certainly it rendered the priest a priceless service, and one he was waiting for. From now on theology will not speak of the priest save in communion with and as the extension of the bishop, whose co-worker he rightly is. Through the daring and positive statements of the Council, all Christians now find themselves called to recognize the presence of the bishop wherever the priest is present. In and by the bishop, the priest can and should feel himself in living and historical continuity with the mission entrusted to the apostles whose successors the bishops are. In and by the bishop, the priest should discover, through the least of his actions, the whole horizon of the world which is the responsibility of the bishops and for which he labors with them. He is no longer alone, neither in his origins nor in the end of his mission. This essential participation, by making him take part in the profound engagement which defines the bishop and

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devotes him until death to the service of his people, gives the priest the charity necessary for this perfect gift.

Even the *Decree on Priestly Formation*, with its positions and arguments so richly set forth, cannot be considered as having once and for all exhausted all the promise of these fundamental themes.

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One cannot fail to recognize in another connection, the extreme importance of the theological development regarding the laity which the Council occasioned. We know how the Fathers found themselves led, without having foreseen it, to give the laity the dogmatic status which had been gravely wanting. Instead of a simple Decree encouraging practical cooperation of laymen in the apostolate, there is an entire chapter of the Constitution devoted to them. Already the chapter on the people of God had the lay faithful in mind throughout. But the laity was both studied and defined in two connections: in relation to the very notion of the priesthood and in that of participation in Christ the Priest. The Council started from the position that all the baptized are called to the one total community. It did not, accordingly refuse a place to laymen when it came to deal with any of the approaches usually studied in connection with the priestly ministry. The layman was not to be excluded from the communication of the message, from active participation in worship, nor from the effort to control those realities over which Christ is king.

Perhaps the first instinctive reaction, as we can already perceive, has been one of surprise. It actually requires an effort to prevent confusion from arising over the form of the layman's and the priest's participation in the priesthood. The Council did not, of course, fail to make the proper distinctions required on this point. But work still remains to be done to study more deeply and to be more explicit about the forms of participation proper to the laity in this exercise of their sacerdotal being. We should be pleased that the Council did not hesitate to get to the bottom of a need imposed upon it. We must preserve the

conviction that by developing all that is present in germ in the conciliar Constitution on the subject of the laity, we will place ourselves in the best position for recovering in their fullness the peculiar traits of the ministerial priesthood already perfectly defined. We must not conceal from ourselves the fact that there is at the present hour, under pressure of the problems of which we have spoken, the danger that the priest will seek to make contact with the reality of the world by trying to make himself more like the layman. This is a dead-end street. As we have practically said already, it is with the bishop that the priest should seek to discover the law of his state. If it become difficult to distinguish between the priest's function and the layman's, this will be to the detriment of both. In reality, the existence of a theology of the laity can only be profitable where there is a clear and lively consciousness of the priest's role in the service of laymen.

Starting from the considerations that have just been made, how can we envisage the lines of investigation towards resolving the question of the priest of tomorrow?

My dwelling on superficial, equivocal, and even dangerous ways of posing a question like this is not pointless. It should be clear that solutions arrived at uniquely within the structure of a situation and without theological and dogmatic guideposts, are false solutions. We might say as much of all the researches based on the assumption that there is in existence no teaching about the priesthood, as if the theology of the priesthood were yet to be made or remade.

No theology is constructed solely from human realities, psychological or sociological. Even less does it start from data which but represent the opinions of some people, any more than from needs which have value as signs rather than as sources.

Here we touch on one of the gravest menaces to appear in theological research, a menace all the more serious in that it compromises valuable, even necessary elements in work and in research. It is not fanciful today to fear the confusion of the conditions of the priesthood with the notion of the priesthood.

It is a danger not confined to this case. Some months ago, composing a digest of the Council and of the conditions in which the Church finds herself, having in mind practical values for the sake of implementation,<sup>1</sup> I was led to make note of a grave tendency to turn upside-down the relation between fact and principle. I wrote: "The often disconcerting novelty of situations calls for ever greater analysis and study: technology provides for this ever more perfectly, especially by the resources of statistics. But the wealth of this documentation and the novelty of the information are not without risk: one can lose sight of the principles which ought to direct the application of these data in order to regulate its conduct. So we frequently witness true and disastrous inversions: in moral matters, the situation tends to determine conduct and make itself, so to speak, a law unto itself; in apostolic matters, the "conditions" of the project to be pursued, the experiences, tend to dictate a theology, while instead we should require this theology to clarify the use of conditions or to regulate correctly the interpretation of experience. Buried under the weight of data, or dazzled by them, one risks making of the situation itself a law. So, in the end, faith would cease to be a gift from on high, a gratuitous light, to become the fruit of a human experience or labor, and this is equivalent to its ruin."

Never more than today has the rigorous necessity been imposed on us to remember and respect the exact idea of the sources of faith. It is faith that we must ask for the notion of priesthood. It is true that if one makes abstractions of human and concrete realities in which this faith ought to work, one denatures faith, because its nature is to make alive; but the theological scene is never restricted to what the present pressures of an historical situation can tell us. We must consult the whole of tradition. The Council saw this perspective as indispensable. Using it, of course, requires greater precaution and more rigorous delicacy than the laws of any conceptual dialectic. To build an idea of the new priest from the new world is to misuse theology. Theology should be rediscovering in a new

<sup>1</sup> *Le Concile: Orientations*, Paris.

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world the eternal qualities of the priesthood, enabling the priest of today to know that in his understanding of his role he is in total continuity and perfect communion with the priest of yesterday and the priest of the first days.

The fundamental lessons remain. The task ahead of us is to place, in a reality as yet very incompletely analyzed, a theology that is well mastered and drawn from the integral sources, that is to say, from the Word of God lived and interpreted in the Church with the graces of the magisterium. The recent centenary of the Curé of Ars offered, in this regard, an excellent occasion for questioning on the subject of the priest. If you will allow me, I will here mention some reflections that occurred to me then, and which doubtless occurred to many others. Though the conditions of the priesthood be difficult, and the adaptation require sacrifices and changes, perhaps considerable, in the shape of a priest, these changes can be of no value unless at the same time and inseparably they proceed from fidelity to the permanent idea of the priest and from the concrete situation in which he is engaged. We must insert into a new historical reality a principle which is neither old nor new, which comes to us from God. The secret of the future will be in the rediscovery of the traditional figure as close as possible to the newest realities.

In the life and ministry of the Curé of Ars, there was something absolutely valid, independently of the time, something that was the soul of the Curé's life and ministry. This something made the Curé, even in his own time, a Curé so different from others that souls do not mistake him for any other and flock to him in great numbers, as one rushes towards the open door when one wants to be saved, to breathe and live.

Example is still of great value because it puts eternal reality before our very eyes.

That reality is contained in certain words: the love of Jesus Christ; the desire to give him souls; the boundless confidence in the means which the priesthood gives the priest for this purpose.

To love Jesus Christ! Pictures have accustomed us to this peasant's face, worn out, deeply lined, yet made mysteriously

beautiful by the tension of his whole being, of a whole life gathered up into this face, into these eyes.

Tension towards what? Tension towards whom?

The Curé of Ars leaves us no choice in answering.

Towards the host which he looks at, towards Christ crucified, given, present.

In just a moment, in the pulpit, he will reveal, without knowing how or trying to dissimulate it, the secret of his prayer. Listen to him who speaks of Jesus Christ. It is his heart that speaks. It is his faith expanded in love.

This is what the crowds have come to seek, even without telling themselves so.

This priest believes in Jesus Christ, he loves Jesus Christ, as later will a Père de Foucauld, and men who need Jesus Christ are sure of him: this man knows the way . . . he can show us.

He lives with him, talks about him, whether he is alone, or confronting sin, or talking. He has neither the indifference of a man reciting a lesson, nor the hesitation of one who does not know it well.

He does not know a lesson; he loves Jesus Christ truly. He cannot but talk of him.

And this is why everything that is one with Jesus Christ is so close to him, even so intimate: Our Lady, the saints. This is why whatever wars against Jesus Christ finds itself engaged with him in a singular, implacable combat, scarcely comprehensible to us in our softness and cowardice.

This is why the Eucharist is for him a beautiful feast endlessly renewed, the host such a treasure, even as for Père de Foucauld: the presence and the form of his Lord given at the same time.

But how keep such joy to oneself?

How accept the fact that so many men are ignorant of it? And that Jesus Christ is so widely unknown?

How be satisfied with this table set, and so many places vacant around it?

How let the enemy of Jesus continue in the shadow of his

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criminal action, and not force him to combat, whatever the cost?

To bring back souls to Jesus Christ!

This cannot wait, this cannot be put off.

One soul lost, one man who has not been converted, one sinner whom Satan holds in slavery, is an insupportable suffering, which inspires every audacity, gives every courage.

All this is quite simple; it all appears easily too simple to our spirits, disconcerted by new problems, by failures, or victims of contagions. Gladly would we challenge today a formulation of sacerdotal zeal so summary in appearance.

This formulation cannot grow old. It remains. To object to it is to condemn oneself. There are other aspects of the pastorate today, certainly. But this is basic. It cannot remain, even temporarily, in shadow. It belonged to the Curé of Ars, and before him to the Gospel. For him there was no delay, no change, no effacement possible.

But how are we to achieve it?

Here again, the answers seem to crowd in upon us. Or at least it seems that we might waver.

As for the holy Curé, he believed with all his strength, simply, in the means which he had been given to achieve it. This was how he began, and this is how everything came to him. The secret of his extraordinary effectiveness—who would believe he had found it in himself? Who would doubt that he found it in the mysteries of which, so his faith assured him, he was the dispenser, and which had been given him by his bishop? He found it in the Word of God whose messenger he was in his hour, after so many others.

The Church made him a priest, he prepared the Eucharist, prepared the “bread of souls,” rescuing men from Satan, the master of pride and impurity. He believed it.

The Church entrusted to him her tradition, what she believed, what she has been teaching for twenty centuries, what he found again in his catechism and, beyond that, in the writings of the saints, and even in all those who, before himself and better than himself, he thought, had preached the Word of God.

All this he believed.

And his faith allowed him to draw out of it, according to the promise of the Gospel, unheard-of marvels. In all this he was thoroughly engaged, and his priesthood remade him into another Christ, crucified with his Master. His very flesh served, by an effective immolation, as an instrument for the salvation of souls: from the pulpit to the altar, from the altar to the confessional, he knew no other journey.

That was a hundred years ago!

The world may have changed; the priesthood has not.

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But the world has effectively, considerably changed.

Or rather, the present conditions of the priesthood are such that they threaten to place the very idea of priesthood in peril. It is necessary, then—to use an expression commonly accepted today and a little imprudent—to re-examine and redefine, in this new world, the “priestly state,” so that the priesthood can be placed in a state of life and action. Is this not what the Council considered for the whole Church when she judged it opportune and necessary to add to the *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* a *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*?

Having briefly recalled the law of fidelity to the essence of the priesthood and its permanent content, we must then at least, to remain in the spirit of the Council, say a word about present conditions. They are orienting the future and preparing our tomorrow; they permit us to sketch the external profile of the priest as it will manifest, in a new context, the eternal truth of the priesthood of Christ. But it would be rash to go too far and to prophesy. A certain number of points stand out with just enough evidence to let one discern in them the seeds of the future.

This much it is possible to say: The priesthood of tomorrow's priest will be missionary; it will be communal; it will be intimately wedded to the priesthood of the laity; finally, it will be

obliged to reinvent a new asceticism, more demanding than the old.

The priesthood of tomorrow will be missionary, that is, to use the language of the French bishops in their Assembly of 1960, it will turn itself deliberately towards those who are far away, to give them, in intention and action, a real priority. It is the priest who ought to take the most lively cognizance of the actual situation and to suffer more from reticence and hesitation. Under many forms, he is already resolutely engaged in this direction and not without sometimes ignoring other needs. He has already largely accepted the fact that those who are far away may be his law and may truly be for him the root of the matter.

In the life of the priest, such an orientation is heavy with many consequences. Not only does it require, to be in contact, material sacrifices, the abandonment of certain conveniences of life, but more profoundly it requires of him that his life reveal more perfectly the transcendent and absolute. Indeed it is for such revelation that he has been dedicated, and only too often this kind of revelation is not discernible today. It is in this line that we must place the profoundly felt need for poverty. Seen superficially as an aid to the apostolate, it does not respond to the depth of the divine call which inspires it. The poor priest is above all one for whom God is enough, and who thereby makes God manifest. It is in this line again that we must understand the firmness of the Church, which continues to demand of her priests a chastity which is another way of showing that God is enough in the order of affections, after that of material goods.

The priesthood of tomorrow will be communal. This idea goes much further than a simple closeness in residence, and much further than the concentration of effort on what is fundamental. This community, whose roots, as we have said, the Council discerned, is a sign of the essential coherence of the whole priestly body around the bishop. The organisms which are coming to birth by the very requirements of conciliar laws are one expression of it, and certainly not the only one.

On all levels this unity ought to become visible. It has become

so on the level of the bishops around the supreme pontiff. It ought to become so among the bishops of countries or regions. It ought to become so among bishops and priests in each diocese, not excluding the religious. To the extent that this unity is more perfectly seen and more completely given its necessary means, the face of the priesthood will change profoundly.

The priesthood will have to unite more closely from now on with a laity whose dogmatic status the Council has defined, and which should come to realize more and more perfectly its responsibilities in the Church. The Church is in the first moment of this experience of a laity entirely conscious of itself. Catholic Action was one of the first experiences of this collaboration. It can only expand and deepen. The purification of the priesthood of the priests, along with the transfer to laymen of certain supplementary functions that in former times belonged to the priests, will not fail to give their action a sharper quality. Not only will this not signify a confusion, but it will permit a deeper unity. Here again, in the now almost proverbial expression of Maritain, it will be a case of distinguishing in order to unite. This is a line of action full of promise, but delicate and certainly not without peril. The priest always runs the risk, for the sake of encounter with the layman, of taking his place; the risk of giving up his own identity in order to make contact. His real business is not to take the layman's place, but to help the layman recognize and take his own.

Finally, the priest will have to discover in the new world the forms of an asceticism which will be for him no doubt new, but even more demanding than the traditional asceticism.

We cannot but subscribe to the remarks and desires expressed by Michèle Aumont in her recent work, *L'Eglise écoute*. This university teacher, who became voluntarily for many years a factory worker and is today collaborating in the *Centre de Synthèse*, rightly says that to realize this necessary adaptation of the priest to the modern conditions of the life of men, "ready-made means do not exist, nor techniques, much less recipes. Each one must prudently see what he must do. But he will not

### THE PRIEST OF TOMORROW

succeed in this unless he preserves in himself the equilibrium which comes from reflection and prayer, silence and meditation, in short, from the authentic life of a priest." She adds, "Really, it is inseparably from the spirit and the heart of the priest that an attitude must naturally arise, to direct him all at once and forcefully towards his mission and his times. From his own profound resources then, very properly, will spring profitable action and reflection, warning and reminder, urging and encouragement."

Hence the rigorous and urgent necessity that the priest discover or rediscover the ways of prayer, those of intellectual labor, those of the humblest virtues in the form in which the times require a mastery of them.

The priest of tomorrow ought to be, even more than the priest of yesterday, a man capable of prayer. The importance of the choices he will have to make, the more profoundly personal character of his decisions, make this capacity for contemplation an essential feature of the priest of tomorrow. It would be vain to claim to remove this interior dimension from him under pretext of a more urgent action.

The gravity of the new problems makes the priest of tomorrow equally a man of study. And here again, nothing will prevail against an absolute necessity. If the priest does not find the time necessary for thought and reflection, now more indispensable than ever on account of an existence less perfectly regulated beforehand, his action will be rendered impossible. Discernment of the lines of providence in a world so new requires men capable of seeing clearly and interpreting intelligently.

It is also impossible to disregard the necessity of a rigorous moral discipline. The present conditions of the ministry call for a promotion of the virtue of temperance for the priest in his humblest requirements. One should think, too, of the need for a daily schedule, of the risks run by one who deprives himself of sleep and whose worn-out nerves offer little resistance to perils greater than ever. The priest of tomorrow, close as he is to

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men, will be a priest rigorously disciplined, under pain of futility.

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It would doubtless have been tempting to develop further one or another of these traits of the priest to come, and I should like to have done so. But it would have been careless not to have devoted most of my attention to recalling essentials in danger today of being swamped by the overwhelming requirements of reality, yet alone capable of authentically assuming these same obligations.

It can be said without exaggeration that the appeals addressed today by the priest to those who have charge of his formation or those who hold authority are justified appeals. But it is the business of those responsible to see to it that the true inspiration, which comes from God and through the notion of priesthood professed by the Church, is effectively the law to which we submit in interpreting these aspirations and in giving them, for the good of the Church, a true response.

## 11.

### STAGES OF CATHOLIC ECUMENISM FROM LEO XIII TO VATICAN II

ROGER AUBERT

To attempt to indicate the principal steps in the growth of the ecumenical mentality in the Roman Church is no easy matter for, in this domain as in others—and probably more than in others—the lines of development were not parallel in all geographical groups nor, above all, in the different sociological and spiritual levels, which together form that immense religious body which constitutes the Roman Catholic Church. There is the *corps d'élite* of the avant-garde who have already, by their trend of mind and their initiative, deeply penetrated into the succeeding stage at the same time that the massive rear guard is still exercising pressure in an attempt to keep the Catholic body in a position already abandoned some time before. However, while taking account of this observation, one which must never be lost sight of during this talk, it is possible to discover and to describe briefly several characteristic milestones along the road which led, in three-quarters of a century, to the sensational turning point of Vatican II.

#### THE PERIOD OF THE ILLUSION OF UNION

There is never an absolute beginning in history; it would not be difficult to point out various attempts before the pontificate of

Leo XIII to make contact with Christians separated from Rome in an effort to bring them back to Catholic unity. However, something new made its appearance during the pontificate of Leo XIII, especially in the Vatican: a new spirit. Where there had been a resignation, that seemed to have prevented further losses or where, at best, there had been a Platonic longing and invitations to union spoken in a void, there succeeded well planned action and systematic efforts aimed to prepare the return to Rome of parts of churches, or even whole churches like the Oriental Christians and the Anglican Church who, in their external structure, appeared less remote than others from the Church of Rome.

Some writers have gone so far as to say that the reunion of the separated Oriental Churches with Rome was Leo XIII's chief concern. I consider the statement to be an exaggeration, but reunion was certainly one of the chief preoccupations of his pontificate, from his first encyclical until his death and, above all, after the Eucharistic Congress of Jerusalem in 1893. It was an active preoccupation, expressed not only by pious desires but by a series of concrete decisions. Among the latter, mention must be made of the pro-Slavic policy systematically applied in the Balkans under the aegis of Rampolla, but especially the intention, clearly stated in the encyclical *Orientalium dignitas* (1894) and subsequently repeated again and again, to abandon Pius IX's policy of latinization of the Uniate patriarchates and to respect, henceforth, the originality of the oriental traditions, an absolutely essential condition if the catholicity of the Church were not to appear a vain word to those outside. In this area, Leo XIII appears as a precursor who breaks with a centuries-old tradition, held not only by the Roman Curia, but also in the common thinking of Catholics of the Occident, and turned, though still timidly, towards a pluralistic conception of Catholic unity which is an indispensable presupposition for an ecumenical mentality. Doubtless the hope, at one time very strong, of the return to Rome of important sections of the churches of the Near East had finally to be given up—there could be no illusion about the deep hostility of Russian Ortho-

doxy. Similarly the hopes, awakened about 1895 by the efforts of Lord Halifax and Father Portal to bring about an understanding between the Anglican and Roman Churches, were in vain. But at least, for the first time in many years, Rome had taken seriously the question of a possible reconciliation and had realized the necessity of not waiting for others to come all the way and of admitting that she herself had to change her attitude somewhat in order to make this reconciliation possible.

From the point of view of union, the pontificate of Pius X was a digression. It was dominated by the Church's anxious care to fall back on her foundations so as to resist the danger of modernism and the better to assure her internal spiritual revival. Then one sees reappear under Benedict XV, an ancient disciple of Rampolla, and during the first years of the pontificate of Pius XI, the same concern to bridge obstacles so as to prepare the way for the return to Rome of the Orthodox and the Anglicans.

The Orthodoxy then considered was not so much the patriarchates of the Near East as Russian Orthodoxy shaken to its foundations by the fall of the czarist regime. There were hopes that a large number of the bewildered exiles crowding into the Catholic countries of the West would quickly rally to Rome, and preparations were begun for the spiritual reconquest of Russia beginning with the Ukraine by an honest though often rather naïve effort to present an authentically Eastern aspect of Roman Catholicism. Many events point to this concern: the foundation at Rome of the Pontifical Oriental Institute and the organization, the same year, of an autonomous dicastery for the Eastern Church, the support given to the Ruthenian Metropolitan of Galicia, Monsignor Szepticki, especially in the reorganization of Basilian monasticism; a little later, the encouragement of works destined to receive Russian refugees such as Istina at Lille, the creation of the Russicum and the short-lived favor shown Monsignor d'Herbigny placed at the head of the pro-Russia Commission. A similar purpose can be seen in the letter *Equidem verba* of March 21, 1924, suggested to Pius XI by Cardinal Mercier, inviting the Benedictine order to take

part in a special way in the "work for the restoration of unity" with the Slavs of the Oriental Church, a letter which was the foundation charter of the Monastery of Union at Amay-sur-Meuse. The priory of Amay, later transferred to Chevetogne, was, under the prophetic guidance of Dom Lambert Beauduin, to become the first authentic ecumenical center within the Roman Church, though, at the moment of foundation, it was envisaged both by Monsignor d'Herbigny and by Pius XI as only a starting point in a vast enterprise for the collective conversion of Russia.

Rome also expected conversions in more or less compact groups from another attempt carried on during those same post-war years, the Malines Conversations. On four occasions between 1921 and 1925, Catholic and Anglican personalities seeking reconciliation of their churches met for confidential theological discussion around Cardinal Mercier and Lord Halifax in a truly fraternal atmosphere. From the beginning Pius XI positively encouraged the Archbishop of Malines to go ahead, on condition that the discussions maintain an unofficial character and, until 1924, as is proved beyond any possible doubt by the Roman correspondence preserved in the diocesan archives of Malines, the Pope and his Secretary of State renewed their support on numerous occasions and in unequivocal terms. As has been remarked more than once, it was certainly not a question at Malines of ecumenism in the proper meaning of the word but of discussions aimed at preparing a "corporate reunion" of two specified churches. All the same, it must be admitted that, on the psychological level, the Malines Conversations constitute an important date in the history of the flowering of an ecumenical mentality in the Catholic milieu. Mercier, enlightened by Portal, had grasped that a dialogue between separated brothers ought not to be an apologetical controversy intended to prove the other wrong, but a frank and serene confrontation where, without betraying his own dogmatic convictions, each sincerely tried to understand the other's point of view and where he is in part justified. The rather numerous publications inspired by the Malines Conversations in the course

of the following years revealed to numerous Catholics this new method of discussion, a method not only irenical but open and comprehensive, and also awakened among them a certain number of ecumenical vocations which were to bear fruit in the next generation. Moreover, the Malines Conversations, as a result of the widespread repercussions which they caused and which went far beyond their real, objective importance, have had the great merit of provoking a change of climate in inter-confessional relations. Returning from one of these discussions, an Anglican participant wrote to Mercier: "It is perhaps the first time in four hundred years that scholars, Protestant and Catholic, have been able to discuss with absolute frankness for hours on end the most serious subjects which separate them intellectually without the cordiality of their relations being disturbed for even an instant, or their confidence in the future troubled. . . . Even if the immediate success is of negligible importance, I believe that for many it will be a starting point towards a new progress and that we will have the greatest reason to thank God." This Anglican was not mistaken: the Malines Conversations revealed to a certain number of Catholics the depth of the faith and the Christian life of these Anglican brothers, so misunderstood until then; they likewise revealed to a certain number of non-Catholics another, hitherto unsuspected aspect of the Roman Church so that Catholics suddenly appeared to them for the first time as "possible brothers."

Unfortunately these seeds, destined to be so productive in the long run, could not at once produce the fruits that might have been expected. Indeed we know that, after supporting the undertaking for three years, Pius XI then became more and more reserved and finally, after the death of Mercier in 1926, asked that the Conversations not be taken up again. The reasons for this change are still not completely clarified. One might expect him to have been influenced by the hostile reactions of the Catholic hierarchy in England and disappointed that, on the Anglican side, things moved less quickly than he had anticipated. But it must likewise be taken into account that beginning in 1925 there was a change in the whole policy of Pius XI with

regard to union. Henceforth the once cherished prospect of the return to Rome of the Russian Orthodox seemed more problematical to him than at the beginning of his pontificate, while at the same time he was worried by the doctrinal liberalism prevailing within the ecumenical movement which took on definite form at the Stockholm Conference in August, 1925, and in which the Church of England officially participated. At the same time, his desire to settle the Roman Question, once and for all, by a conciliatory solution made it necessary to give certain guarantees to the intransigent party in the Sacred College, grouped around Cardinal Merry del Val. This brings us to the second stage of our exposition.

### THE PERIOD OF MISTRUST OF THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

Just before the beginning of the First World War, the two movements at the origin of contemporary ecumenism were launched. At the end of the conflict, they strove to unite representatives of all the churches in great international conferences trying to separate elements of reconciliation, even of unity, from their divergencies and oppositions. One of the movements, *Life and Work*, was concerned with the practical area of social action and pacifism; the other, *Faith and Order*, was concerned with doctrine. The leaders of both movements made overtures at Rome to invite the Roman Church to join their efforts, but the refusal of Benedict XV and of Pius XI, although courteous, was none the less categorical. What is more, with regard to the latter movement, concerned as it was with the level of dogmatic affirmation and not only with practical collaboration, the Holy See deemed it necessary to warn the faithful officially against any inclination to participate in the activities of what was then beginning to be called the "ecumenical movement."

As early as 1919, after being approached by the organizing committee of *Faith and Order*, which attached great importance to the participation of the Roman Church, Benedict XV had the

Holy Office publish a decree renewing the earlier prohibition, drawn up under Pius IX, of taking part in congresses and public or private meetings organized by non-Catholics with a view to bringing about the union of the Christian communities. Further, on the eve of the conference which, after several postponements, finally met at Lausanne in August, 1927, this interdiction was confirmed: Pius XI believed that even the presence of Catholics in a private capacity might prove gravely inconvenient in that it seemed to indicate that Rome accepted the principle, implicitly admitted by a good number of the participants in the conference, that the Christian revelation is neither objectively unchangeable nor universally obligatory. To the question, "Are Catholics allowed to be present at gatherings or to support conferences whose purpose is the reunion of groups calling themselves Christian?", the Holy Office drily answered on July 6, "No, the decree of July 4, 1919 must be observed."

Many Catholics were astonished by this rigid attitude. To them on the contrary, the ecumenical movement appeared at first glance as a manifestation that should have attracted all the sympathy of the Roman authorities, if they truly wished the return of all Christians to unity. It was in order to put the faithful on guard against the false theological conceptions of the nature of the Church, of tradition and even of revelation which were basic to this movement towards union—a movement so attractive in itself because of the intentions animating its promoters—that the Pope deemed it necessary to give an official explanation of the abstention of the Roman Church. This he did, with an inflexibility that we find astonishing today, in the encyclical *Mortalium animos*, published January 6, 1928. Here the Pope denounced the illusions of those whom he called "panchristians," whose efforts seemed to him based on a state of confusion about doctrine rather than on respect for revealed truth: "It is clear that the Holy See cannot participate, under any conditions, in their congresses, nor is it permitted for Catholics, under any conditions, to participate in or to assist these enterprises. If they were to do so, they would be attributing authority to an erroneous form of the Christian religion entirely

alien to the one Church of Christ. Can we tolerate—what would be the height of iniquity—negotiations at the expense of truth, especially divinely revealed truth? . . . These panchristians, who seek to federate the Churches, seem to pursue the very noble design of promoting charity among all Christians, but how can charity turn to the detriment of the faith? No one is ignorant of the fact that John himself, the apostle of charity, whom we see unveil the secrets of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in his Gospel, and who constantly reminded his disciples of the new commandment “Love one another,” absolutely forbade any association with those who did not profess the doctrine of Christ whole and entire. . . . How is it possible then to imagine any kind of Christian agreement whose adherents, even in matters touching the object of faith, would keep their own particular manner of thinking and judging, even though this was repugnant to the theories of others? And how, we ask, would men who hold contradictory opinions constitute one and the same society? . . . We do not know how this profound diversity of opinion could open the way to the unity of the Church, when this unity can spring only from a single teaching authority, a single rule of faith and a common belief shared by Christians. But we are certain that it is an easy step towards negligence of religion, towards the indifferentism and modernism whose unfortunate adherents claim that dogmatic truth is not absolute but relative . . .”.

This severity, which at times bordered on incomprehension, due in part to the influence of Cardinal Merry del Val, is also partially explained by the concrete circumstances in which the ecumenical movement was born and had its first development, namely that of liberal Protestantism; in those years and from the very heart of the Reformed world Karl Barth was protesting against its nationalist and naturalistic tendencies.

During the thirties it became more and more evident that the doctrinal bases of the ecumenical movement were tending to deepen and to undergo an “interior purification” (the expression is Father Congar’s) that especially, while the pragmatic aspects, predominant in the beginning, tended to be reassimilated, the

movement showed a growing concern for fidelity to the biblical conception of the Church. This explains why, in 1937, when the two groups, *Life and Work* and *Faith and Order*, held their second general assembly (the one at Oxford, the other at Edinburgh) Pius XI, taking into account the change that had taken place, unofficially allowed some Catholics to attend in a private capacity with an "entire freedom to be present at all the meetings without, however, taking an active part in the debates nor in the voting."

But this unofficial authorization given to a few steady individuals did not imply any change in the official relationship of Rome to the ecumenical movement, nor any change in the general directives given to the faithful and to the clergy as a whole, namely a categorical refusal to participate, even unofficially, in the activities of the movement, whether theological or practical. When analyzing the reason for this attitude in 1937, Father Congar remarked that Rome was afraid that by joining the ecumenical movement, even while making all the necessary doctrinal reservations as was the case with the Orthodox Church, she would expose herself and, above all, would expose many of the simple faithful to the risk of seeing unity contaminated by plurality: "The Catholic Church fears that ecumenism may be a temptation to let herself be drawn into the logic of multiplicity, which is relativism, compromise, concordism and private judgment, for the sake of unity; she fears that unity may unlearn and lose more in the process than multiplicity will learn and profit; now the Church knows that she alone has the mission and the grace of unity and of plenitude and that she does not bear in vain the name and the responsibility of catholicity." Moreover, Congar pointed out the Roman reticence before one of the most characteristic aspects of contemporary ecumenism, the conviction that there is a divine will for the Church that is not entirely given in the past, but in the future, and to which the Church should be open. Now "without denying that God intervenes and speaks in history, the Church fears than an action drawn too exclusively to the future, may lead to forgetfulness of the data that, without being properly speaking of the

past, are, however, something definite, acquitted, and indefeasible. She fears that the anxiety to hear God in 1937 and to obey him may lead to forgetfulness of the promises and the creative words which are at the origin of a Church whose continuity with Christ guarantees against the possibility of failure and the necessity of becoming other than it is. Such, we believe, is ultimately the most decisive motive in an attitude which it would be wrong to take as a wish for isolation and haughty imperialist pretension."

Such was to remain in its essentials the position of the Vatican until the end of the pontificate of Pius XII, in spite of a few attenuations beginning in 1950. But, for the two decades between the encyclical, *Mortalium animos* and the instruction *De Motione oecumenica* of December 20, 1949, a slow evolution had been going on in certain parts of the Catholic world—not, certainly, against Rome, but in any case outside of Rome—quietly preparing a new climate whose manifestations began to be more sharply defined after the end of the Second World War.

### THE DIFFICULT AWAKENING OF A CATHOLIC ECUMENISM

The evolution which, in less than forty years, was to lead from the haughty condemnations of *Mortalium animos* to the *Decree on Ecumenism* of Vatican II was, essentially, the work of a few farsighted and courageous pioneers, only a few of whom can be recalled in this brief sketch.

The first in chronological order was a Belgian Benedictine, Dom Lambert Beauduin, founder of the monastery of Amay-Chevigne. At a time when the Vatican envisaged this monastery essentially as a training ground for future missionaries destined to convert Orthodox Russia, Dom Lambert, who for years had been considering the problem of the division of Christianity, saw things in a much wider perspective. He saw that, quite as much as the orientalizing of the future converters of Russia, it was his task to reveal to Western Catholics—and here it is a question of

those well beyond the circle of specialists—the religious wealth of the Christian East, in order to prepare them to receive the East, with its tradition intact, into Catholic unity. Even more: he saw that it was his task to make them desire the very useful complement which the living contact with the Eastern liturgy and spirituality and with the liturgy of the Greek Fathers would constitute for a Church too confined within the Latin tradition. Furthermore, he quickly understood that the question of the reconciliation of the Roman Church with the Oriental churches could not be approached in a realistic fashion without placing it in the broader framework of contacts with all the branches of separated Christianity, especially with Anglicanism, already for many years in close relationship with the Orthodox; with this, his point of view changed from unionism to ecumenism. He had likewise understood, and never stopped repeating “in season and out of season” that, if it were desired that our separated brethren feel at home some day in a common Church, this Church would have to be decentralized and open to pluralism that would not only be liturgical, but also canonical and even theological. This is the basic idea of the report on “the Anglican Church, united, not absorbed”—a report, utopian from some points of view, but prophetic from others—which he drew up for Cardinal Mercier at the time of the Malines Conversations: his unpublished letter to the Cardinal shows that he perfectly understood its profound significance which went far beyond the simple case of England. Finally, in the same spirit which had reigned over the Malines Conversations, Dom Lambert strove from the very beginning to spread among Catholics a new mentality touching their manner of approach to problems concerning the division of Christians. It was a question, he wrote in the brochure that stated his program, of “creating among separated Christians easy and pleasant contacts, where the subjects that would reconcile would be studied before any others and, above all, of establishing in the Catholic world a progressive and continuous initiation into all the wealth of the separated Christian Churches: the liturgical and spiritual

riches of Eastern Orthodoxy, the qualities of Anglican piety, the love of the Bible among Protestants, etc."

To serve this ideal Dom Lambert launched a revue, *Irenikon*, in 1926, which has shown the way to other Catholic reviews founded subsequently in the same spirit, just as Amay provided a meeting place for ecumenical dialogue unique in Catholic Europe of the time. Like all prophets with bold ideas, Dom Beauduin quickly met opposition from worried officials of the "Institution" and, after several years, found it necessary to withdraw into the background. This he did with a heroic self-abnegation that certainly brought blessings on the obscure work of his companions, whose prudence succeeded in saving the work in the midst of the storm. Among those who carried on and assisted in making *Irenikon*, after the Second World War, the great, Catholic ecumenical review, universally appreciated among all the Christian confessions, a special place must be given to Dom Clement Lialine, a man of whom Father Congar has drawn a penetrating portrait in a few lines: "In him the monk, the Slav with his faculty of seeing what lies at the heart of the matter, the astonishingly cultured, curious, and well-informed man, and the faithful and considerate friend were one. He carried on a dialogue by correspondence which identified itself as much with the life of his own spirit as with his friendship itself. He truly lived the ecumenical movement by reflection, by friendship, and by prayer. He had an intuitive sensibility to things and to men, but would go on to express his perception in a terse intellectual construction that was sometimes excessively subtle."

I have just mentioned the name of Father Congar. Few men, in the course of those difficult years, have done as much as he to establish the theological bases providing a status for ecumenism in the Catholic milieu. His book *Chrétiens désunis. Principes d'un oecuménisme catholique* (*Divided Christendom. A Catholic Study of the Problem of Reunion*, 1939) published in July, 1937, before the two great conferences at Oxford and Edinburgh, is an important milestone in the doctrinal order, just as was the foundation of Amay, twelve years before, in the order

of action. At the same time as he revealed to a large public the positive Christian values found in the great Christian confessions and sometimes cultivated to a degree unequalled in the Roman milieu, he established along the lines of an authentically Thomist tradition, the theological possibility for a Catholic to go beyond the earlier point of view, which believed that it must limit itself to bringing about the conversion and the "return," pure and simple, of separated brethren to the Roman Church and of resolutely welcoming the ecumenical perspective which envisages the reunion of scattered portions of the Church of Christ in a manner that is above and beyond anything in previous experience. Today this book is outmoded on several points; it suffices to glance at Father Congar's recent volume, *Chrétiens en dialogue* (1964) to see the progress of a quarter of a century. But *Chrétiens désunis* enlightened a whole generation of theologians and was especially helpful in aiding them to place their studies in view of Christian unity against the background of a renewed ecclesiology or, more exactly, reattached to its sources, nourished on a biblical and traditional food that surpasses the legalism of the treatises on the Church born of the Counter-Reformation. Its work was to be continued by the collection *Unam Sanctam*, founded by Father Congar just before the war, which has done so much to help Catholics discard the narrow perspectives of post-Tridentine ecclesiology without falling into a pseudo-mysticism forgetful of authentic institutional elements. It is likewise in this collection that Father Congar published a large volume, *Vraie et fausse réforme dans l'Eglise*, in 1950. Here, once again, he employed the double light of theology and of history to guide the groping quest of the Catholic movement of reform in the post-war years, from which was to grow the great movement of aggiornamento in the Church, so important to the existential and psychological reconciliation between the Roman Church and the ecumenical movement.

Like Dom Lambert Beauduin, Father Congar was also to know the bitterness of being suspected by ecclesiastical authorities and, during the period of integrism which marked the latter

part of Pius XII's reign, he was silenced and even exiled. With the same supernatural heroism he was willing to let "the time of patience" run its course, while in those same years it was possible to carry on the doctrinal support of ecumenism in Catholic circles successfully, not only in Germany, as will be seen later, but even in French-speaking countries thanks to men like his colleague, Father Christopher Dumont. This apparently timid but, in fact, prudently audacious man was the soul of the center *Istina*. Happily his reflections on ecumenism, always so carefully thought out and with a remarkably well-informed sense of men and things, grasped in their concrete evolution, were taken up again by the collection *Unam Sanctam* under the title *Les voies de l'unité chrétienne* (1954). Mention must also be made of Father Maurice Villain whose lectures and writings have contributed so much to the spread of a mentality that was authentically ecumenical and not just unionist among the younger clergy, of the more technical works of Canon Gustave Thils, professor at the University of Louvain, and of Monsignor Charles Moeller, a leading spirit since 1943 with Dom Olivier Rousseau of the ecumenical meetings at Chevetogne. But before leaving the French-speaking countries one name must be mentioned in a special way, the name of one who, like Dom Lambert, was a prophet: Father Paul Couturier. He it was who, to quote Father Congar once more, "spiritually founded the vast movement which today carries the ecumenical hopes of the world" by giving a new spirit to the Church Unity Octave, initiated in America at the beginning of the century and, until his time, centered on the "return" of heretics and schismatics to the Roman Church and the conversion of the Jews and the pagans. In 1935 he proposed that it be made a week of universal prayer for the unity of Christians during which one would ask of God "the unity He wills by the means He wills," thus making it possible for non-Catholics to participate in it fully. Thus, this little mathematics professor, sickly and without resources, was to play a decisive role in the extraordinary development throughout the whole world during the next twenty years of the January octave, which was for so many of the faithful the opportunity of

discovering the problem of Christian unity and, for an important number of them, the occasion of actively devoting themselves for the first time to this great cause and of thus glimpsing that it required something very different from the esoteric work reserved to specialists in theology and in the history of the Church or to ecclesiastical diplomats. Without denying the interest of doctrinal study in the service of Christian reunion, Father Couturier, reviving certain aspects of the *Life and Work* movement in a less equivocal perspective, constantly insisted on the fact that "it is vain to wish first for the accomplishment of the unity of minds in truth and later the union of hearts in charity" and that "it is a question of all Christians entering into a fraternal and holy emulation of humble, repentant prayer and of a deepening of the interior life," inviting all to strive to rediscover that which is essential to Christianity by living a faithfulness to his confessional ideal to the very limit, heroically if necessary. Nothing could better conduce to soften a certain triumphalist and self-assured mentality with which too many Catholics had until then approached the problem of the reuniting of Christianity than the appeal to a "spiritual rivalry" proclaimed by Father Couturier.

I have stressed the roles of Dom Lambert Beauduin, Father Congar, and Father Couturier because their international influence and the spread of their ideas far beyond Roman Catholicism have been great since before the war, but nothing would be further from the truth than to believe that nothing of importance was done outside of France and Belgium.

In Germany, especially, where Karl Adam and Romano Guardini had begun immediately after the First World War to move beyond the excessively juridical ecclesiology of the Counter-Reformation towards a more biblical and more patristic conception along the lines of J. A. Moehler, some Catholic circles of ever widening influence began, in the early thirties, to be more keenly aware of the problem of the disunion of Christians. The impulse for this development came from valuable theological studies like the work of the Jesuit Pribilla, *Um kirchliche Einheit*, reviews like *Catholica*, founded in 1932 by

Dean Grosche of Cologne, or movements like Monsignor Metzger's fraternity of prayer, *Una Sancta*. At the same time Professor Lortz, in a work which was a turning point in Catholic historiography, *Die Reformation in Deutschland*, courageously revealed Catholic responsibilities in the drama of the sixteenth-century defection as well as the deeply religious character of the real Luther, whom a facile apologetic had been accustomed to consider simply as a bad monk on the loose.

While these and other similar works were going forward on the intellectual plane and, in spite of the ill-tempered reaction of the conservative groups, progressively clearing up a whole series of centuries-old clichés and prejudices, a much closer approach than in other countries was beginning in Germany between separated brethren on a concrete and existential level: the mutual opposition to Hitlerism, then the upheavals of the war and the post-war period forced Roman Catholics and Evangelical Christians to collaborate. The organization of collective prayers in shelters and concentration camps, the common use of places of worship in bombed cities or evacuation areas were factors in a lasting, mutual understanding for the faithful and the authorities of both confessions. A new spirit was born after the war; in it, on the one hand, circles for fraternal meetings, charitable activities, gatherings for prayer in common, on the other hand, institutes for study and ecumenical research like those at Mainz and at Paderborn could be created and developed.

After the war, in other countries that had long been indifferent to the ecumenical problem, there was, according to the region, a gradual and more or less timid, but undeniable, awakening. In Holland where, for many years, there had been interest in the return of Eastern Christians to Roman unity—such was the principal end of the *Apostolaat der Hereniging*, a very well organized but definitely apologetically oriented group—the common resistance to Nazism had brought Catholics and Protestants together as in Germany, and the atmosphere of mutual ignorance and mistrust, which had long characterized relations between the two confessions, began to change, more

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noticeably on the Catholic than on the Reformed side. In Switzerland, where much attention was paid to what went on in France and Germany, various projects developed and were observed favourably by the bishop of Fribourg, Monsignor Charrière; for example, the group around Father Chavaz. In England, where there was an especially lively traditional distrust of all attempts at reconciliation with non-Catholics, the *Sword of the Spirit*, a movement of interconfessional collaboration in charitable, social, and international matters on a common Christian basis, was organized during the war under the intelligent guidance of Cardinal Hinsley. After the death of the Cardinal, the movement unfortunately no longer enjoyed the same support by ecclesiastical authorities but, on the other hand, in some abbeys and religious houses one sees the timid beginnings of a new mentality, one striving to replace an apologetic polemic by a dialogue which made it possible to discover the deep Christian values preserved by the interlocutor and to begin an examination of conscience on the religious reasons for his confessional reactions. Even in southern Europe, although admittedly in restricted but far from negligible groups, certain transformations gradually took place. The open attitude of the Faculty of Theology at Venegono-Milan and of its review, *La Scuola Cattolica*, the success of the study weeks for Christian Unity at Bologna in 1948 and in Palermo in 1957 are examples, among others, of this new spirit. In such an atmosphere it is not surprising, that from this time the attitude of Rome began to evolve slowly.

## THE VATICAN'S FIRST STEPS TOWARDS AN UNDERSTANDING WITH THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

The fact that all the activity we have mentioned was able to develop between 1925 and 1950 indicates that, even if the Vatican showed a great reserve and even some mistrust there was no question of a systematic stifling. Following *Mortalium*

*animos* it was decided to suppress the review *Irenikon* and, a little later in 1931, even the monastery of Amay, but these decisions were almost immediately revoked, and the arrival of Cardinal Tisserand at the head of the Congregation for the Oriental Church soon improved the situation and allowed the monks, who were striving for union, to carry on this excellent work, at first discreetly, then more or less openly. Likewise, in 1939, Father Congar had had difficulties over certain pages in *Chrétiens désunis*, difficulties that began again shortly after the war, increasing until draconian measures were taken in 1954. But, at the same time, the Dominican center Istina saw its audience, including some from the Roman milieu, increase; the movement begun by Father Couturier was an example that spread and there were many workers who, as long as they preserved a minimum of prudence, could give themselves without hindrance to the great cause of Christian unity and launch ideas that, ripening slowly but surely, spread little by little, from restricted avant-garde circles to seminaries and soon to bishops' chanceries. Moreover, considering the prevailing atmosphere of collaboration towards the building of a better world among all men of good will in the post-war period, it was becoming increasingly difficult for Rome to remain indifferent to the transformation which had taken place in hearts and minds in one generation.

A first indication of this was furnished by the foundation at Rome itself in 1945 of the international association, *Unitas*, by the Prefect of Studies of the Gregorian University, Father Boyer, whose orthodoxy and devotion to the Holy See were above suspicion. The association, which was soon publishing its own review, aimed at grouping together Catholics and all men of East and West who recognized Christ as their Master and at encouraging mutual esteem and reciprocal knowledge among them. A detail was characteristic: although the central committee was to be made up exclusively of Catholics, it had been at first agreed that one-third of the national and regional committees could be non-Catholics, but it was finally decided that these could not be received as members but must be satisfied

with the title "friends." Beyond doubt, if Rome were becoming more and more conscious of the impossibility of disregarding the problem of Christian unity, that openness to the ecumenical spirit, such as had developed for a generation, was still lacking. As Dom Olivier Rousseau put it: "There was no disentangling of proselytism, uniatism, individual conversion, ecumenism, *ritorno*, and there was a desire to smile on one side and to scold on the other."

However, the ascending position assumed by the ecumenical movement within the Christian world after the war, and its progressive organization, leading to the founding of the World Council of Churches in 1948, willy-nilly made it impossible to continue to think and act with an exclusively intra-Catholic perspective, systematically ignoring this major religious fact of the religious history of the twentieth century. Step by step official Roman Catholicism was obliged to state its attitude towards the ecumenical movement and to the activities to which it gave rise.

When the first general assembly met in Amsterdam in 1948, the Roman reaction was still very negative. But eighteen months later the directive of the Holy Office, *De motione oecumenica* (dated December 20, 1949, and published on March 1, 1950), introduced a new era by showing that even in Rome they were henceforth convinced that it was no longer possible to maintain the purely negative position of *Mortalium animos*: while the ecumenical movement had become interiorly purified and theologically deepened a new dimension had gradually opened out in the Catholic world; the directive had ratified the consequences of this double evolution. Doubtless the document still seemed a warning at first sight but, on closer examination, it was seen that beyond any doubt it constituted a very positive encouragement to Catholics engaged in ecumenical work. The introductory part was sufficient to make the change of climate evident; it affirmed the great interest of the Roman Church in non-Catholic efforts towards unity and went so far as to attribute these to the action of the Holy Spirit; what a long way from the thinly veiled sarcasms of *Mortalium animos*! Moreover, as regards

the future, while still unbending with regard to principles and very prudent in practice, the Roman authorities, far from repudiating the private initiatives which had multiplied in certain Catholic circles with a view to promoting contracts with separated brethren, clearly instructed the bishops to encourage those that gave "hope of good results." And, something that seems elementary today, but which then was an innovation in many Catholic circles, especially in England, the directive explicitly authorized Catholics to pray in common with Christians of other denominations under certain conditions. As was noted by Dr. Visser 't Hooft, Secretary General of the World Council of Churches, "the very fact that such a document was published manifestly shows that the Ecumenical Movement has begun to exercise an influence on the ranks of the clergy and among the faithful of the Roman Catholic Church."

The important first step had been taken. However, in implementing the instruction, Rome remained extremely timid. Nothing was done, for example, to insure the presence of Catholic observers at the second assembly of the World Council of Churches at Evanston in 1954. And the invitation of the Greek Church to participate in the ceremonies commemorating the nineteenth centenary of the arrival of St. Paul in Greece was not accepted. As Father Dumont wrote in an article indicating his disappointment in the Vatican's attitude towards ecumenism during the pontificate of Pius XII: "It was not, alas, to be the only opportunity missed during the course of this pontificate."

Yet, in spite of everything, there was a cautious progress. Without exaggerating their importance, one cannot entirely overlook the significance of the audiences granted by Pius XII to several important members of the Anglican, Lutheran, and Reformed Churches, a small but real indication of the progressive "thaw" in official relations between Rome and the non-Roman Christian world even if the Pope, contrary to what has been done since, took care to exclude all ecclesial significance from them, and to place them, rather, on the plane of a gathering of spiritual forces against the growing threats of atheistic materialism.

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More noteworthy, although less spectacular, was the foundation of the Catholic Conference for Ecumenical Studies on the initiative of two Dutch priests, Fathers Willebrands and Thijssen, in 1952. In the absence of all official or unofficial relations, this body, which was in close contact with Roman circles, was to become the link between Catholic ecumenists and the offices of study of the World Council of Churches. Quietly but efficaciously it carried on this delicate work, striving particularly to have Catholic theologians study the themes put on its programs by Geneva and to forward reports, giving the Roman point of view, thus assuring, without being integrated with it officially, the beginning of a dialogue with the World Council.

It is not surprising, under these conditions, that it was to this Catholic Conference and to its dynamic animator that Rome turned to form the basis of the Secretariate for Unity when the coming of John XXIII brought a new spirit with regard to ecumenism into the Vatican and when, after the announcement of a Council, the necessity of incorporating this new spirit in a new institution became apparent.

But here, at the moment of the great change begun by John XXIII, we approach the last milestone, decisive in the history of Catholic ecumenism, Vatican II; it is outside the limits of this brief retrospective sketch and deserves detailed study in itself. In concluding, as we consider this last stage so rich in promise and so completely un hoped-for a few years ago, let us limit ourselves to the reflections of a Catholic veteran of the work for unity shortly after the Instruction of 1949—the Instruction that was the first sign of the spring that now blooms before our eyes: “Here is the result of twenty-five years of obscure, difficult, energetic, and constant efforts by those in the Catholic world who vowed themselves body and soul to the cause of Christian unity.”

## 12.

# THE EVER-RECURRING PROBLEM OF LANGUAGE IN THE CHURCH

CHRISTINE MOHRMANN

THERE has existed and still is existing all through the life of the Christian Church a problem of language which presents itself in many different ways.

There is, first of all, the general problem of language and religion so much discussed in our days: the astonishing fact that man by means of a profoundly human instrument, as language is, speaks of the unseen, the divine, of God whom he calls at the same time "*inenarrabilis*"—unspeakable and inexpressible; that he speaks not only of God, but also addresses himself to God by means of human speech. And, to come in particular to the phenomenon of Christian religion and faith: there is the problem of the one message of salvation and the many human languages in which the message has to be formulated. On the other hand, there is (in the Western Church) also the phenomenon and the problem, I dare say, of the one official language of the Church and the *many* national, living languages. There is also the fact that all languages bear the mark of a particular civilization and a particular period of human history, that they are always changing according to place and time, but that all of them have to speak of One who is always the same, above all times and untouched by the instability and inconsistency inherent in everything human.

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All these problems regard in the first place languages as means of communication. But human speech does not only serve to communicate actual facts; it is also the interpreter of all motions and workings of the human mind—religious experiences included—and, above all of human sensibility. To use a term of modern linguistics, language is also a means of expression. In this field of expression the wide-spread phenomenon of sacred languages has to be localized. Here language plays a very special role within the framework of religion. In the field of expression lies also the phenomenon of glossolalia, speaking in tongues, and even in a paradoxical way, that of the *silentium mysticum*. It is on these manifold phenomena and problems that I might make some remarks as a linguist and a philologist—not as a philosopher, and still less as a theologian.

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The question whether religious language can have any meaning at all, and to what extent communication of things unseen is possible, belongs more to the field of philosophy than to that of linguistics. I will therefore confine myself to a few remarks on this problem. Here, the main point is that language is a structural system of communication between men. What counts for the linguist is whether a message sent by a speaker to his partner is *understood* by this partner. Thus for the linguist the meaning of language resides in its use, since the primary function of language is to communicate. Now this communication does not take place in a vacuum, but in the framework of a structured, traditional system of language which is determined by social, cultural, psychological, spiritual, and chronological factors. Modern linguistics uses several terms for these language units which create the possibility of communication: they speak of different "contexts," or "situations," or "registers," or "language games," or of different "special languages" or "group languages." Thus we may say that we have to view religious language, and particularly its vocabulary, as a structural system with a specific way of organizing experience, in particular religious experience. The system works as a means of communication in a religious

context, or as a group language. About the validity of the religious context the linguist has nothing to say. He only can put on record the fact of the existence of this context, these registers, and so on, and study the way in which human language works within it.

From the moment this religious context does not exist any more, the religious language system of communication is ineffective. This brings us to another, concrete, problem: that of the possibility of existence of a religious language in a world which is becoming more and more secularized. I won't discuss this problem for the moment, because I might make some remarks at the end of my lecture on the linguistic problems we are facing in our days.

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Whereas linguistic experience shows that religious communication is possible within the framework of an existing religious context, we now come to the problem of the communication of one religious message in many languages. This is a problem of which Christians have been aware right from the beginning. The Old Testament sees in the existence of many languages a punishment of God, and the question about the one original language—already mentioned by Herodotus—has also been raised among Christians of the first centuries. In early Christian times, Origen and St. Jerome considered Hebrew as the language of Adam and, thus, as the first language of mankind. Jerome says (*Ep. 18 A, 6, 7; Hilberg, p. 82*): "Initium oris et communis eloquii et hoc omne, quod loquimur, Hebraeam linguam, qua vetus testamentum scriptum est universa antiquitas tradidit (see *Origen, II. Hom. in Num. 307*). This view lived on in the middle ages. In his *De vulgari eloquentia I, 6*, Dante says that along with the first human soul, God has also created a form of language, "as well for the denomination of things as in the structure of sentences." And this original language all mankind should have spoken, were it not that it was destroyed by the sin of our pride. Only the Hebrews, Dante goes on, have stood by their original language, so that the

Saviour had not to speak in a language of confusion, but could speak in the language of grace, which in the beginning was laid on the lips of men. A beautiful thought which develops in an unexpected way the idea that the multiplicity of human languages was a curse. Later, Dante gives another—more reasonable but less beautiful—view on human language. Even Hebrew, he says now, is not the creation of God. It is the work of human nature, and the language of Adam had already disappeared before the construction of the tower of Babel (*Paradiso* 25, 133 ff.).

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The earliest preaching of the Christians immediately faced its exponents with the problem of the multiplicity of human languages and the one message of salvation. The most striking illustration of this fundamental problem is to be found in the story which marks the beginning of Christian preaching: in the events recorded in Acts 2, 4, the problem of language for once found a miraculous solution in the charisma of the first Whitsunday. However, in the story of this miraculous event we do not only find an allusion to the problem of the multiplicity of languages, but there is suggested also the idea that the joyful message is not linked to any language, that it surpasses every human language.

The linguistic problems of the first Christian generations are of a general, universal character, and they occur over and over again all through the history of the Church, also in our days: not only in those countries to which the Christian message is brought for the first time, but also in the Western world with an age-old Christian civilization, and particularly in our days: now that we are rethinking the Christian heritage. Particularly the question of the relation between the secular world and religion raises many problems of language. There is a tendency towards renewal of theological and generally-spoken Christian vocabulary, which reflects new trends in theology. It can be useful and interesting under the circumstances to reflect on the linguistic experience of the first Christian centuries. The problem of the

encounter of *world* and *Church* was in those days as current as it is now.

Twenty years ago, Canon G. Bardy published a book entitled *La question des langues dans l'Eglise ancienne* (Paris, 1948), in which he gives a survey of the linguistic position in earliest Christendom. His book shows clearly how important, almost decisive, a role language played in the first centuries of the Church's existence. Canon Bardy considered the language problem primarily from a historical point of view, and he has described how and when the Christian message found its expression in the different languages of the world during the first centuries of our era. But there exists another side of this phenomenon which—at least for us—is more interesting: how was the Christian doctrine and thought formulated in the languages of the ancient world. How did the first missionaries, the apostles and the early preachers, how did the first Christians in general formulate the joyful message in the languages of the ancient world, above all in the two great languages of classical civilization, Greek and Latin. Or, to speak of the most important—though not only—element of this innovation: how did the first Christians create a vocabulary by which they could communicate what they considered to be the essence of the new doctrine and the new way of life in a world marked by a long pagan tradition?

We are concerned here—as I have said already—with an ever-recurring problem: the adaptation of a language to the difficult task of becoming the mouthpiece of the Message of the Gospel takes place whenever and wherever the Christian message is introduced to those who have not yet heard it. The circumstances under which the process takes place can be different from those of the first Christian centuries, the languages can be of very different structure, always the problem to be solved is essentially the same: there must be formed in the languages the means to communicate about things spiritual and institutional till then unknown.

In this lecture which deals with the general problem of language in the Church I cannot give a detailed account of the

process of adaptation of Greek and Latin to the needs of communication and expression of the early Christians. The process started in pre-Christian times in the circles of the Hellenistic Jews with the translation into Greek of the Old Testament. The influence which these translations have had on the origin and development of "Christian languages" can hardly be overestimated. In the Greek of the LXX there was not only given a starting-point of linguistic differentiation, there was not only shown a way to adapt certain Semitic elements to the Greek-Hellenistic world and Greek-Hellenistic speech, there was also shown for the first time how Greek—which had always been so resistant against every foreign, exotic influence—could absorb certain foreign elements consecrated by religious tradition and even adapt itself to a literary style which was thoroughly different from that of classical Greek literature. And this, in Greek eyes exotic, book furnished the first elements of what should become in the future a Greek language marked by biblical Christian thought and way of life. Christian Greek should become, in its turn, the starting-point and example of early Christian Latin, which was created along the same lines, but not without bearing the marks of typical Roman-Latin tradition: a great openness to the introduction of foreign elements, a great openness also to the adoption of elements of popular speech and of newly coined words, but on the other hand a great aloofness and reserve regarding linguistic elements belonging to pagan religious speech.

The process of "Christianization" of the two great languages of the ancient world was dominated by the leading ideas of the newness of the Christian message and the otherness of Christian faith and religion, of Christian thought and life compared with the pagan world. These two leading ideas dominate the process of change and innovation which made Greek and Latin in the end the languages of a civilization and a world marked by the Christian faith.

There were innovations in the field of semantics: existing words adopted—in the circles of Christians—a new meaning, whereas in the general, common language, they kept their old

meaning. The process of semantic shift took place within the limits of the semantic structure of common language, the innovations were not arbitrary, though foreign influence could lead to radical shifts in meaning. And it is not always easy for us to see and to reconstruct by which way of thinking the shift took place. It is difficult for us to see, for example, how the Hebrew "kabod" resulted in the Greek δόξα, as it is not easy to explain how "*sacramentum*" became the Latin equivalent of the Greek μυστήριον. On the whole we may say that most semantic shifts took place in words with a very general non-technical meaning in common language, in words which were semantically not "resistant." Many words which had a very general meaning in common language became thus technical terms in Christian language. There is—and this is a general phenomenon also in modern religious language—an interchange between common language and special (group) language (in this case Christian language), not between one group-language and another. There was, for example, in the first Christian centuries no interchange between the technical language of the mystery religions and that of the Christian religion, neither in Greek nor in Latin. The often mentioned great influence of Roman military language on early Christian Latin is fabled. I could quote more examples. The reason for this linguistic fact is clear: a term in use in a technical language usually has a well defined meaning and as such it is semantically resistant. Many words of the general, colloquial language have a more vague, less clear-cut meaning, they are not resistant and more readily take on a new, technical meaning, always in the framework of a special group language.

As soon as words get a clear-cut technical meaning, they become more dynamic and thus are the starting point for the coining of new words: once "salus" had taken on a spiritual-soteriological meaning in the speech of the Christians, it gave birth to new technical words as "salvare" and "salvator." When "spiritus" and "caro" became central in Christian spirituality, they gave birth to new words like: "spiritialis," "carnalis," "carnalia," "carnaliter," and so on. And "caro" being used in Christian

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language in different contexts, it was also the starting point of a Christological technical terminology: "*incarnari*," "*incarnatio*." A lexicological innovation like "*incarnari*" shows also how these newly coined words stayed within the bounds of the general structure of the language. When the *verbum deponens* "*incarnari*" was coined, the category of the *verba deponentia* was already on its decline, but nevertheless "*incarnari*" (a "learned" term by the way), followed the example of the age-old *deponentia* "*nasci-mori*," with which it was semantically related.

Not only were existing forms given a new meaning, and new words coined, but also—particularly in Latin—many foreign words were introduced, particularly for concrete things and institutions. The loan-word has the advantage of being *signe pure*, it has no structural links with the language into which it is introduced, and as such it could satisfy the consciousness of newness so alive in the first Christian centuries.

I spoke of the "resistance" of words, technical terms which hardly could adopt a new technical meaning. This resistance could be so strong, that particular words were consciously *rejected* by the Christians because they suggested pagan ideas or institutions. On the other hand, biblical terms—and not only purely technical ones, but also biblical words with a general meaning—were easily introduced into the colloquial language of the Christians. In the long run Christian language was thoroughly marked by biblical linguistic usage.

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As I pointed out at the beginning of this paper, language serves not only to communicate facts (and this is valid also for religious "fact"), but it is also the interpreter of all the motion and workings of the human mind and of human sensibility. Language is not only a means of communication, but also a medium of expression. Expression can have various aims: to establish contact between one person and another on a sensitive level, of man with himself and also of man with God, with the world of the divine. Prayer considered from a linguistic point of view, particularly the official liturgical prayer of the

Church, usually lies more in the field of expression than of that of communication. This it has in common with poetry.

Language as a means of expression is not merely a question of the individual element of personal style. It can also occur as a mode of expression based on a collective tradition. The linguistic form is the medium of expression of a group living according to a certain tradition. In such cases linguistic usage is often deliberately stylized, and there exist language and style forms, transmitted from generation to generation, in which people deliberately deviate from language as pure communication, from the common language of every-day life in order to obtain a certain artistic, religious, or spiritual effect. Thus there exists a traditional stylized use of linguistic elements, which have no direct contact—or a diminished contact—with the common language of contemporary life, but which continue to survive in another, non-material connection. Whenever this phenomenon occurs in the field of literature, we speak usually of a *kunstsprache* or "stylized language." In connection with religion we commonly speak of sacred, sacral, or hieratic languages. Sacred languages are always the result of a religious, collective tradition. Within the framework of this different tradition a more or less artificial, often archaizing style or linguistic form is created and conserved. This can also be a so-called "dead" language, that is, a language which is no longer in actual use as the colloquial language of an ethnic or national community.

This linguistic form reduces, in its isolated position, the element of comprehensibility in favour of other elements, preferred by their spiritual potentialities, and thus lying more in the field of expression than in that of communication. It will be clear from what I said, that a language does not become a sacred language by the bare fact that it speaks of religious facts or experiences. Early Christian Greek and Latin, for instance, are not sacred languages as such.

Sacred languages are, in the ancient world, the language of the Greek oracles, the language of certain ancient Roman prayers. In the Christian tradition Old Church Slavonic, Byzant-

tine Greek of the liturgy of the Eastern Church, Elizabethan English of the Book of Common Prayer, Hebrew of the Jewish liturgy and—last but not least—the liturgical Latin of the Roman Catholic Church. In all these cases there is a stylization, which often has been reinforced, according to the linguistic feeling of the people, by a distance in time, but which has existed to a certain degree right from the beginning. To take one example, no Roman citizen ever spoke in the language and style of the Roman *Canon Missae*. Vulgar Latin has never been used in Roman liturgy. As soon as Greek had to make place for Latin in the Roman liturgy, a highly stylized liturgical language was created. Nevertheless, for a Catholic of the twentieth century this element of stylization is experienced as being much greater, and is actually much greater, than for a Roman of the fifth or sixth century.

Concerning the general character of sacral languages, the question may be raised: Are there certain rules according to which sacred stylization takes place? The procedures of stylization are different from language to language, but there are certain general characteristics and trends which occur in different languages. First of all, there is a certain conservatism, a tenacity of old linguistic forms and formulas. This trend was so strong in ancient Roman pagan tradition that for centuries prayers were respected whereas even the priests didn't know the meaning of the formulas. Secondly, there is a tendency to introduce certain foreign elements which suggest an association with religious thought or with ancient religious tradition. In the third place, there is the use of certain stylistic procedures belonging to oral style: parallelism and antithesis, rhythmic clausulae, rime, alliteration, and so forth. By these and other stylistic means there are created particular linguistic and stylistic structures which are clearly different from common languages and which are handed down from generation to generation, practically unchanged.

Now conservatism can go so far, the distance between the common and the sacred language can become so great that the sacred language outlives the language from which it

originated. Thus in the field of the romance languages, liturgical Latin outlives common Latin. A liturgical language even can be introduced to peoples who have never spoken the common language from which the liturgical language originated. Thus liturgical Latin came to the Irish, the Anglo-Saxons, and to several continental Germanic tribes, which had never been in contact with ancient Roman Latin. Nevertheless, we must not forget that liturgical Latin was not brought to these peoples as an isolated linguistic phenomenon. At the same time, Latin was introduced as the language of higher civilization, of the schools, and of ecclesiastical and governmental administration. Thus all through the Middle Ages, Latin as the language of the liturgy was supported by Latin as the second language of a cultural élite. The first opposition to liturgical Latin coincided with the end of medieval Latin as a "living second language," which was replaced by a "dead" language, the Latin of the humanists. And the opposition in our days to liturgical Latin has something to do with the weakening of the position of Latin—and with the tendency towards "secularism," already mentioned.

There is, regarding the phenomenon of sacred languages, still left a question which requires an answer. How to explain from a linguistic and a psychological point of view—in the framework also of the history of religions—the existence, up to the present times, of sacred languages? First of all, nobody will deny that at the origin of the phenomenon there are certain elements of magic which play a role, particularly in regard to the extreme conservatism which is one of the most universal characteristics of sacred languages everywhere; it is at the same time one of the most important elements which are responsible for the great gap between sacred and common language. According to the way of thinking of many so-called primitive peoples there is a unity of linguistic sign and referent. The sign *is* the referent. Thus the word has a magical force and it is—according to this view—of extreme importance to use the right word in naming and addressing divine forces. This word once found, one does not take the risk to change it.

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Thus at the root of the conservatism of sacred languages there lies this magic of the word. Nevertheless, the linguistic phenomenon of sacred languages goes—without any doubt—far beyond these limits of primitive, magic thinking. Every form of belief in the supernatural, in the existence of a transcendental being or transcendental beings, leads necessarily to a form of sacred language in worship—as a consistent secularism leads to rejection of any form of sacred language.

This being established, we can say—I think—that the phenomenon of sacred languages may be explained in the first place by the tension which is experienced between common everyday life and what is considered as belonging to the world of the supernatural, the divine. This tension is effective regarding the profoundly human and at the same time delicate instrument of human language. There is in man the consciousness of the divine being far away and at the same time very near, of the supernatural which is insensible (*incomprehensibilis*) and even unnamable, but at the same time real in an even disconcerting way. This experience can have the most paradoxical effects upon human language.

There is, first of all, the phenomenon of glossolalia (speaking in tongues) where human language is used *ad absurdum*. Under an overwhelming religious experience, language loses what is its essence: communication. St. Paul, in 1 Cor. 12 ff., is not favourable towards glossolalia; he prefers the *προφητεύειν*, the language of communication.

There is also the phenomenon of the *silentium mysticum*, where language, as being too human, is excluded. Between these two extremes (both of them excluding the human element of communication) is located the phenomenon of sacred languages. There is no complete exclusion of communication, but this element is diminished in favour of the expression.

The sacred language which, as liturgical language, addresses itself to God, intends not in the first place to communicate on a human level. It intends—in a paradoxical way—to construct through the instrument of human language a sort of bridge between the transcendental and the human, secular world. There

is the consciousness of the otherness of the divine world, which reflects itself in linguistic expression.

The question whether in our Western civilization there is place for the use of sacred languages, is a difficult one to which I cannot give—I am afraid—for the moment a definite answer. One thing has to be taken for granted: this question is not necessarily limited to that of the existence of liturgical Latin. There is nowadays a certain opposition—in the most varied religious circles—against all sorts of stylization and sacralization, included linguistic stylization. On the other hand, one also hears criticism as to the use of common, everyday language in cult and liturgy. But one must not forget that the problem of sacred languages in our day is part of a much bigger and almost universal problem: How far is the process of desacralization and secularization of our culture going to go? As to the linguistic side of this problem: most Western languages have already gone very far on the way of desacralization—particularly those languages which have had no lasting contact in the past with biblical language in the vernacular, like French and Italian. Most Germanic languages have still a living tradition of biblical language, which is a sort of antidote to linguistic desacralization. Nevertheless, it won't be easy, even in those languages, to find the material for a modern form of sacred style (if this is not a contradiction in terms) fit to replace—to cite only two examples—the Latin of the Roman liturgy and the stylized English of the Book of Common Prayer.

\* \* \*

These remarks bring us to the role of Latin in the Western Church. Latin in the Western Church has been for centuries, not only the liturgical language—the language of the official prayer of the Church and, as such, the language of expression—it has been and is still the official language of communication. I might make a few remarks about this role of Latin in the past and in our day.

There exists an age-old tradition in the Church which speaks of the *tres linguae sacrae*. This has nothing to do with the discussed phenomenon of sacred languages but everything with

the problem of communication in the Church. The *tres linguae sacrae* were, as you know, the three languages of the inscription of the cross: Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, according to John 19, 20. The commentaries of the Fathers of the Church and the medieval authors can be regarded as a real "topos." In the fourth century Hilary of Poitiers speaks in his *Tractatus super Psalmos* (*Prol.* 15, *CSEL* 22, p. 13) of the three languages, mentioned in the inscription of the cross, as being "sacred" because in those languages "is preached above all the mystery of the will of God (the economy of Salvation we would say) and the expectation of the coming kingdom of God." Thus for Hilary, the languages as such are not "sacred," but they play an important role in the economy of salvation and in Christian doctrine. Hilary, then, points out that Latin had in the inscription the place of honour between Hebrew and Greek, because the doctrine of the Gospel was spread in the Roman Empire to which belonged *Hebrei et Graeci*. A purely historical reason, inspired by Roman chauvinism! St. Augustine considers the three languages in the framework of cultural and Christian tradition when he says: "Those three languages occupied there a pre-eminent place. The Hebrew language in behalf of the Jews who took their pride in the Law of God; the Greek language on behalf of pagan wisdom; the Latin language on behalf of the Romans who were dominating at that time almost all peoples" (*In Joan. Ev. tract.*, 117, 4). This, again purely historical, view of St. Augustine will be repeated many times, all through the Middle Ages. The philologist St. Jerome, on the other hand, considers the three languages in the first place as necessary and indispensable instruments to understand holy Scripture. This idea also occurs in the Middle Ages, and the fact that it was repeated by Isidore of Sevilla, combined with the Augustinian idea just mentioned, is partly responsible for its great diffusion (*Etymol.* 9, 1, 3).

What is important for us in this "topos" is the fact that the value and importance of Latin is seen in the role it has played in the history of salvation and also in that of Western civilization. Latin is not *lingua sacra* because of its intrinsic value. In the battle now going on for Latin as the language of the liturgy

and of the Church in general, there is brought to the fore repeatedly—as has been done so often in the past—the argument of the intrinsic, outstanding value of Latin as language. I mention particularly two recent books, that of Madame Bernadette Lécureux, *Le Latin, langue de l'Eglise* (Paris, 1964), and that of Madame Marie-Madelaine Martin, *Le Latin immortel* (Paris and Brussels, 1966). I am sorry that I cannot agree with these two ladies in this respect as I cannot in many others. The predominance of Latin in the history of the Western Church is *not* due to the intrinsic value of Latin as language but to particular historical facts.

I need not come back to the role of Latin during the first centuries of the Church, but what I wish to stress here is the great importance—for the Church and Western civilization—of the continuity of Latin in the Middle Ages, due to the fact that the Church in the period of transition from antiquity to the Middle Ages maintained Latin as her official language in the strictest sense of the word. The coming into being of insular Latin, the movement of restoration of a Latin tradition known as the Carolingian Renaissance, these and other facts which resulted into the phenomenon of medieval Latin, had not been possible without the decisive influence of the Church. But on the other hand, without this phenomenon of medieval Latin, second, learned, but in a certain respect living, language of medieval civilization, there would have been a break in the transmission of the doctrine of the Church as well as in that of the classical heritage. During the so-called Dark Ages, Latin secured the continuity of ancient heritage. After the rather clumsy beginnings in the eighth and ninth centuries this continuity of Latin resulted in an extremely rich medieval civilization, where Latin was the mouthpiece of a rich literature, marked by the double tradition of classical and Christian culture. This dualism, far from being a handicap, was a stimulating element in medieval civilization. Thus medieval Latin was a living instrument, changing and developing with medieval life itself. But it was always the handmaid of the vernaculars, second language of higher civilization and as such the mouthpiece of an international élite. When in the thirteenth century, as a

result of political, social, and economic influences, the vernaculars took in part the place of Latin in literature and also in other branches of medieval civilization, the Church was faithful to Latin tradition. And once more medieval Latin proved to be a living language, capable of taking on new tasks: scholasticism brought about a far-reaching renewal of Latin technical terminology, only to be compared with the innovations in Latin in the first Christian centuries. Thus Latin had shown once more its vitality. At the same time, this was the beginning of the end: the end of Latin as a living, universal language of an international civilization. Latin as the language of scholasticism was a very technical language, a group language of theology and philosophy. An opposition then arose against the "newness" of this scholastic Latin, bringing about certain classicist, humanist movements from which developed humanistic Latin, that is, a language which lacked the creative freedom and latitude of medieval Latin.

Though the Church maintained Latin as her official language in theology and philosophy, in administration and as curial language, it had become, and it is nowadays, I am afraid, a dead language. Latin died at the moment it had to follow the classical norms and lost the freedom of medieval Latin. And no movement of "modern Latin" can revive a language which for centuries has lost contact with a living, ever-changing civilization.

For us there remains the question, how to appreciate the role of Latin as the language of communication of the Church, in her doctrine, in her theology (I don't speak here of Latin as sacred language in the liturgy). In my opinion Latin has rendered invaluable service as an instrument of continuity, particularly in the periods of decline of European culture. It has been—and is—also an important element of unity. But continuity and stability can lead to rigidity and even to fossilization. And I am afraid that the fact that theology used for so long a period the same terms, once coined, the same wording borrowed from a long and respectable past, the fact that the Church spoke always with the same words belonging to a marvelous but dead language, has furthered a certain laziness

in thinking. There existed a continuity which neglected more or less the everlasting duty of the Christian to rethink the *depositum fidei* and to remould the way it is formulated. Words can so easily become dead elements if they don't partake in the ever growing adventure of human life, reflected in the ever changing languages of mankind.

This is what I meant when I alluded in the beginning of this paper to the problem of the *one* language of the Church and the *many* languages of the modern world.

This stability in words and formulas, which had in itself the germ of fossilization, has led in our day to a certain opposition and even to an outburst of new ideas and new wording—a wording which seems here and there to be in opposition to the old, well-known wording in Latin.

As happens so often, we are going nowadays, I am afraid, a little too fast. And sometimes, in our enthusiasm for innovation and *aggiornamento* we forget, I am afraid, two things: first of all, that there exist certain rules according to which lexicological, terminological innovation has to take place if we wish—by way of these innovations—to communicate. Secondly, that in our present situation the new terminology must find its place in the framework of the common language of Christians—as was the case in the first centuries—because very broad circles of the faithful take an interest in what is going on nowadays in the Church. They are more or less familiar with the traditional terminology, and every new term seems to them to reflect a new element of doctrine.

There is nowadays a tendency towards rejection of age-old terms, which works in an opposite direction from the linguistic rejection of the first centuries, and which is far more radical. At the same time there is often a certain neglect of the fixed rules which have to be respected if language is to fulfil her essential task of communication.

First of all, there is the tendency to abandon certain ancient terms because nowadays they are used in another context, for example, modern psychology (person), or in philosophy (nature) with another technical meaning. This neglects the

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general rule of polysemy in different group languages (or contexts). It is not necessary to abandon age-old Christian theological terminology because the old terms are used nowadays with a different meaning in another technical language.

Secondly, it is refreshing to see that there is a tendency to abandon certain old, stuffy terms for new ones: partly because there is a shift of meaning; partly because we don't like them any more on account of the association they awaken of a world of thinking we consider more or less as "dépassé." But here, once more, we must not forget the general rule that not every shift of meaning requires a new word. And, lastly, the borrowing of technical terms from psychology, modern philosophy, and other special languages, goes, once more, against the general rules of communication.

We are living in a period of renewal, of rethinking many traditional elements of what once, perhaps, we had thought was definitively established. In this movement language plays an important role, as it did during the first centuries of the Church. This trend manifests itself nowadays in a consciousness of newness as in the first days of the Church and this must necessarily reflect itself in language. On the other hand, we must not and cannot say—as we often hear nowadays—that this all is "only" a question of language. It decidedly is not. But language plays such an important role in what is going on in people's minds nowadays, that one should wish a little more care in the use of words, a little more reflection on the meaning of the modern words which we use nowadays and also which we read in the works of the past. For we cannot break the links with the past—and "return to the sources" is still a watchword in our days. A better understanding of the three *linguae sacrae* can often show that we are not as original as we think. A thorough study of the three *linguae sacrae* seems now to be more necessary than ever, not only to give us a better understanding of the "sources" but also to guide us, if necessary, in the coining of a new terminology.

## 13.

# CATECHETICAL RENEWAL AND THE RENEWAL OF THEOLOGY

MARCEL VAN CASTER, S.J.

## INTRODUCTION

### *Interrelations*

THE importance of theology for catechesis is not merely a theoretical affirmation; it is a fact proven by the very development of the catechetical movement. Present-day catechesis owes much to the theological renewal.

On the other hand, the catechetical apostolate has discovered much in the course of its own work. With God's grace, it has found in practice certain insights which books do not furnish. These insights at the beginning often are the kind of intuitions which have to be controlled, justified in their good elements, and rectified or completed in their deficiencies. To this end, today's catechetics calls for further development of theology.

Catechesis appeals to theology for help; but it may also be said that by posing serious problems to theology, it performs a service as well, because in this way it stimulates theological development.

*State of the Question and Plan of this Study*

The fundamental question which must occupy us is that of the contact between God who speaks and man whom he addresses.

One might think it would be more valuable to begin with the study of the laws of this communication. In fact, however, it is easier and more useful to follow the historical movement by which the very conception of the elements of this act has developed.

Hence we are reserving for the end a more detailed study of the act of catechesis, with special emphasis on the role of the personal and communal mediation in this act.

The plan of our study, then, will be as follows:

Part I: The data of divine revelation.

Part II: The influence of anthropology.

Part III: The questions posed to Christian revelation by present human experience.

Part IV: The act of catechesis in which there is established contact between God who speaks and man who believes.

## THE DATA OF DIVINE REVELATION

Theology considers revealed data as its object. We will see in a moment how, in what sense, this expression ought to be understood.

As far as catechesis is concerned, the movement of renewal which has been in evidence since the beginning of the century has taken place first of all on the level of method. The revealed data were not questioned; they seemed fixed; they seemed to be a resumé of dogmatic theology as it was taught at this time.

But the real catechetical renewal began precisely when account was taken of the fact that the principle of catechesis was not a series of abstract notions or a system of theoretical

truths, but the concrete life of persons expressing themselves in their acts; in other words, that catechesis is not first a series of truths expressed in an abstract way, and of disciplinary or moral principles accompanied with certain sacramental requirements, but that its object is a message, the word "message" indicating the announcement of a living reality.

This living reality is the kingdom of God brought and inaugurated by Jesus Christ, the kingdom which exists in Jesus himself. That discovery is due to the biblical movement.

### *The Role of the Bible in Theology and Catechesis*

The role of the Bible was not distinctly perceived in all its significance at the beginning of the new interest in biblical studies.

Some catechists have been content to retain the old divisions of truths to be taught, only illustrated with a greater number of examples taken from the Bible. Others have put salvation history in their program; but when it is examined closely, their manner of giving catechesis is not at all historical. They still keep the dogmatic or doctrinal divisions, especially, God—Jesus Christ—the Church, lined up one after the other in an order that is only apparently historical.

The important thing is, rather, to treat each of these themes according to the development of revelation through the Old Testament, the person and the acts of Jesus Christ, and the understanding of this revelation in the development of the faith of the Church. The principal contribution of biblical studies indeed, is a new way of conceiving revelation itself.

Too often, Catholics have been accustomed to consider revelation as a collection of truths separate from each other, or, eventually, arranged in a doctrinal system and transmitted as if with a single understanding from one age to another.

But the Bible shows us that revelation is not concerned with such a transmission of theoretical truths. The revelation which the Bible transmits to us arises from a record of things which

have come to pass and their interpretation. God reveals himself primarily in historical events, in which he intervenes by his supernatural action, and he gives to certain men in particular a special insight to interpret these events according to the real meaning which God is expressing in them.

These men who have the gift of prophecy are not at all separate from the community. On the contrary, the prophetic gift is located in the very tradition of the people, and the norm of the prophets is precisely the unity that links contemporary events with the central event of the alliance between God and his people, and with the development of that alliance.

We will have to return in Part IV to the consideration demanded by this conception of revelation, according to which God enters history and reveals himself by his acts, and according to which revelation is understood through interpretation of historical reality itself.

In the New Testament, the central event is the new covenant accomplished in the work of Jesus, notably the work of his cross and resurrection. It is consequently this event which becomes the center of a kerygmatic theology and catechesis.

Much has been written on the proper meaning to be given to the word "kerygmatic." Here we will distinguish two meanings which are important in catechetics. The first is a strict sense: kerygma as the first announcement of the Christian message; and the content of this first announcement is precisely the fact of the cross and the resurrection. A second, more general, is that in which the catechist is identified as a *keryx*, or messenger, proclaiming a message, rather than a professor explaining a doctrine.

### *The Role of Liturgy in Catechesis*

Biblical renewal goes hand in hand with liturgical renewal. Catechetics has integrated this liturgical renewal on two levels. On the first, it is recognized that catechesis ought to be an introduction to the liturgy; it ought to prepare the catechumen

to participate actively, personally, and communally in the liturgical celebration. This is true for all catechesis in general, since the liturgy constitutes one of the privileged summits of the encounter of God and man in Jesus Christ.

But the liturgical renewal has likewise brought recognition that the liturgy is a real language, in which God and man meet one another in true knowledge, in an act of knowledge and engagement. Everything that the liturgical movement has done to make the signs of the liturgy better known as a true language constitutes a considerable contribution to catechesis itself, taken in the general sense of an act by which the word of God is communicated to man.

In consequence of this biblical-liturgical renewal, catechesis in its turn has begun to take a form more purely biblical and liturgical. But, as always, some are tempted to pass from one extreme to the other. Whereas there had been too much neglect of the Bible and the liturgy in favor of abstract formulas, now there have appeared those who believe that the Bible and the liturgy are sufficient for all catechesis.

One may say, of course, that a catechesis which develops the biblical themes, and, especially, rediscovers them in the liturgy, will present the revealed message in its totality. But a completely Christian interpretation of the Bible has to take into account the later development of the tradition, and especially the conciliar declarations. Now, to understand these developments it is necessary to know the theological context in which they were born.

The same is true for the liturgy. We have seen already that liturgical catechesis was renewed on the basis of new perspectives in sacramental theology.

### *New Perspectives in Dogmatic and Moral Theology*

In addition to the reasons which relate to biblical and liturgical thought, there are many reasons why dogmatic and moral theology is indispensable in catechesis.

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a. The further clarification of the significance of biblical and liturgical signs. The biblical language and the liturgical language correspond to certain forms of thought, but they do not satisfy the need of the man who seeks to think out the Christian message according to systematic categories. The human mind, indeed desires a certain ordered unity, a certain systematic form. We must not confuse this system with the revelation itself, but some system is indispensable to allow man to think out his faith, his religion, with all the power of his mind.

b. The practical consequences of the message contained in the Bible and the liturgy. The Christian life and human life in general pose numerous moral problems. Now, the response to these questions can only be found in a basic way in the Bible and in the liturgy. A more specific response requires a developed moral theology. This is especially true for current problems and the new situations in which Christians of today find themselves. This brings us to the third great reason why a systematic theology is necessary.

c. Confrontation and dialogue. We have used these two terms to sum up a renewed apologetic. The Christian of today finds himself confronted with men who think differently from himself. He will have to engage in conversation with them on the fundamental subjects of religion, and do it outside the framework of the Bible and the liturgy. He ought to be able to speak of the Church, of Christ, of God in terms that can be understood by men accustomed to modern philosophical thought.

Catechesis, then, stands in the greatest need of theological renewal such as is now taking place. It can already gather some most precious fruits in the documents of Vatican II, especially in the *Constitution on the Church* and that on *The Church in the Modern World*, and innumerable are the theologians who have collaborated in this movement.

The catechesis which integrates these three kinds of influence has become what can be called biblical, liturgical, and doctrinal catechesis.

But one very important field remains to be cleared: that of the Word of God in the events that have unfolded throughout

the history of the Church, and especially in current religious events.

This question will be followed by another that is even now under full discussion, the question of how catechetics should interpret all the problems of human life as they occur in present-day experience.

God continues to speak in the religious events of the history of his Church. This is an area in which catechetics especially needs some light from theology.

Regarding the second question, more theological explanations are already to be found on the witness of the Christian life as a sign of the Christian mystery; but here, too, further developments are highly desirable.

## THE INFLUENCE OF ANTHROPOLOGY

Let us take the term "anthropology" in its philosophical sense: what man thinks of man, the notion of man, the idea man forms of himself, the meaning which he recognizes in or gives to his life, the meaning of human existence.

This is without doubt the question which lies at the heart of all present theological and catechetical problems.

We will consider the influence of anthropology from two points of view. First, from the point of view of divine revelation in the past, data which it is convenient to consider in their anthropological context. Secondly, from the point of view of communicating divine revelation to men now living—a communication which ought to take into account the way this man conceives his own life.

### *The Data of Divine Revelation in the Past and their Anthropological Context*

Here again, one finds biblical studies at the root of the renewal of theological and catechetical thought. Indeed the principle of

all interpretation can be formulated in the words, "the true text understood in its true context."

Now, after having rediscovered the importance of the literary context, and especially that of the literary genres, and after having noted that every event only shows its complete meaning in the historical context of the general development of salvation history, biblical interpretation brought to light the importance of the anthropological-philosophical context.

The authors of the Bible thought and spoke according to their conception of man, and so a knowledge of biblical anthropology is essential for the understanding of the message of the Bible.

The same goes for the texts of the magisterium. For them too, it is necessary to take account, not only of a literary context and of a historical development, but also of the way in which the authors of these texts conceived man. In a declaration of the magisterium, in fact, it is necessary to note the unity and the distinction which exist between the explicit affirmation and its presuppositions.

The affirmation normally bears on religious truth. As for the presuppositions, precisely because they are not regarded as under question, they do not enter into the direct affirmation.

The problem of the unity and the distinction between content and form comes up today forcefully and ever more extensively under the subject of demythologization.

Theologians know how profuse the discussions on this subject have become; we do not have to enter into technical details here.

From the point of view of catechesis, here is what we think should be brought to light.

Let us note that the word "myth" has many senses. We shall retain three of them, and call them respectively the superficial sense, the different poetic senses, and the philosophical sense.

If one speaks of myth in the sense of a purely imaginary, unreal story in which no one believes, one is using the term in a superficial sense. Those who maintain that religion is such a

myth mean that it is not real, because only what is scientifically controllable is for them real.

But myth has a more profound meaning. First, as a poetic literary genre; here it is either a prerational explanation of existence, or a symbolic explanation of this or that aspect of existence in the form of parables, or a totalizing explanation. In this case, it is the goal which polarizes many forces, as does for example the present myth of abundance. But the term "myth" also has a sense which we call philosophical. It then signifies every human expression of the divine transcendence; and this implies that this expression is inadequate.

It must therefore be said that when no distinction is made between the real content and an expression more or less imaginary, more or less inadequate, the myth becomes a mystification. But precisely to the degree that this distinction is made, at least implicitly, the myth can be one of the most valuable expressions of a living reality, so rich and profound that it demands something other than a merely abstract and notional expression.

The task which consists of clarifying this distinction and this unity between the content and form is that of demythologization. Demythologization is concerned especially with obsolete forms. But this negative task ought to be accompanied by a positive effort, that of giving the real content a new expression which harmonizes better with current forms of thought. This is a labor, if not of re-mythologization, at least of reformulation.

This brings us to the second point of view from which to study the influence of anthropology on theology and catechesis.

*Interpretation of the Data of Revelation Received in the Past  
and Reformulated in the Modern Anthropological Context*

Before going on to reflections on modern mentality, I should like to make one general remark: it would be a mistake to believe that the whole Catholic tradition was developed along a single line of thought. Relevant here is the very interesting book by the philosopher Etienne Borne entitled *Catholicisme un et divers*.

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Borne notes two major types of thought, one emphasizing the continuity of reality, the other its discontinuity. I believe that this distinction of Borne's comes to grips with the problem at hand.

Something of the pluralism in the forms of thought observable in the proceedings of the Second Vatican Council form the basis of a deep and illuminating article which appeared in *Les informations catholiques internationales*, December, 1961.

But to come to modern mentality, let me indicate what are perhaps its principal traits by saying that our contemporaries have a dynamic conception of man, and that they stress anthropocentric values, that is, they permit man to regard himself as the center of interest in both the social and the cosmic sense.

Catechesis and theology ought to be able to enter into dialogue with this modern mentality. The law of this dialogue will be, as always, that of openness to whatever good there is in this conception, and especially to whatever there is of value in its novelty. But the same law demands that accentuation must not become exclusivism, and that by some kind of dialectic a synthesis be recovered of all the elements that are together essential.

Anthropology is thus seen to shed light on the outlook of contemporary man from two points of view. There is a third, however, which deserves more extended treatment and which can be said to unite the other two; I refer to the importance of anthropology for the interpretation of human experience in a Christian perspective, and this will be the subject of the third part of this paper.

## QUESTIONS POSED TO CHRISTIAN REVELATION BY CONTEMPORARY HUMAN EXPERIENCE

The problem I should like now in this third part to examine is one related to anthropology as a whole. It concerns human experience in Christian perspective, as just stated.

Men of today looking around find in their present situation a

number of positive signs and some wide open questions. They are looking to Christian revelation for the meaning of those signs and the answers to those questions. In other words, men are raising questions pertinent to their human situation, and theology and catechesis ought to be supplying answers.

The problem has developed according to four distinguishable currents, which are related to spirituality, to the apostolate, to philosophy, or to catechetical pedagogy.

### *The Current of Spirituality*

Renewed attention is being given to the significance which the unforeseen event may have for Christian conduct. On the Protestant side this current blends with that attitude which attaches greater importance to the unforeseen call of the Lord than to the generalized and clearly expressed prescriptions of an institution. On the Catholic side, this current becomes one with the spirituality of trust in Providence.

But in the perspective of a new philosophy (to be dealt with below, the reading of God's will in events takes on a very different and more dynamic meaning because it entails a new recognition of the role of human initiative.

### *The Current Relating to the Apostolate*

An abundant literature has developed in the apostolic movements about the theme "revision of life" (see, for example, the work of Père Bonduelle). It was first concerned with a simple method characterized by the three well-known words, "observe, judge, act." But in fact it deals with much more. We are faced here with a special manner of thought and action in direct relation to an actual situation.

Finding oneself in the framework of a movement of action, it is natural that one consider the third step of the method the

most important, and also the most difficult to determine, since the other two offer no special difficulty.

But on more profound reflection on what these three words mean, one discovers that the first, "observe," presents real difficulties. "Observation" is not simply dealing with a superficial, limited experience. Our looking at the situation must be enlarged and deepened. This leads to long and serious analyses of the situation, sociological and psychological analyses, and then to analysis of the conception of life to be found at the basis of the facts before us; analysis not only of the exterior acts of men, but also of the motives that make up their mentality.

Likewise, the question of "judging" is not at all to be taken lightly. It is not, in fact, enough to be a Christian in order to judge as a Christian; indeed, how many judgments of Christian men are influenced or determined by class prejudice or by other forms of interior or exterior influences!

It is precisely here that the role of theology and catechesis becomes urgent. Before treating this role in detail, we must note the current of philosophy.

### *A Current of Philosophy of Existence*

For a large segment of modern philosophy, man is precisely he who is called upon to judge his situation and act according to his judgment. Provided one avoids the exclusivism which has already been denounced in the formulation of situation ethics, one is perfectly authorized to form a judgment on the basis of a situation. Placed in his concrete existence, a man is provoked by the exterior environment to an interior reaction, and this reaction is made according to a value judgment.

It seems that we may apply here, too, the two categories of thought mentioned above, namely, emphasis on discontinuity and emphasis on continuity.

The first emphasis takes a special form in the study of the correct interpretation of the "signs of the times."

This expression, which has become current, covers many possible meanings; let me refer to an article on the subject written by Father M. D. Chenu in *La Nouvelle revue théologique*. There he makes a clear distinction between a general and new phenomenon which may be called a "sign of the times" and the meaning which is given it in interpretation. Thus, the growing socialization of the world is a sign of the times, but the new forms of atheism are interpretations of certain signs of the times.

The other aspect of life is that of continuity. A situation has, in fact, always a permanent aspect. Within this permanence new facts come about.

It is important, then, to interpret in a Christian way, not only the new phenomena, but also the great permanent realities of life. Take for instance the phenomenon of youth and all that goes with it: the zest for life which can express itself in a rage for pleasure or for manifestations of violence; the desire to develop one's personality; or simply the desire for liberty. And in all this, account has to be taken of the dimension of the group, the group integrated with society or not, the group leading to interpersonal communion or not.

These are the great questions, either modern signs of the times or permanent problems of existence, which require an answer from theology and catechesis. Whoever says that the answers have already been given, are ready-made, written in the Bible or in the declarations of the Church's magisterium, shows that he does not understand the situation.

Hence the necessity to practice a new working method in theology and catechetics.

### *A New Current of Pedagogy and Catechesis*

It is possible that in regard to working methods catechetics is ahead of theology. Indeed, theology has not yet done much towards a method by which to elaborate a Christian interpretation of situations or problems of life. The official Church is

certainly open to this perspective; we find an outline in *Gaudium et spes* whose general structure develops in this direction.

For its part, catechesis is about to undertake, especially for adolescents, full research and experimentation on the working method suitable to the interpretation of situations or to the clarification of problems of life in a Christian perspective.

This is not the place to detail the efforts made in this direction, but may I insist on the importance I attribute to a phase of deeper research within this new method. We must avoid, indeed, making superficial judgments, just as much as we must avoid making superficial or artificial approximations between the human data of a present problem and the words of the Gospel.

The true connection between the life of today and the life of Christ lies on a deeper level. One of the most important elements of our method ought therefore to be this penetrating into a problem, first on the human level, then towards comprehensive understanding of the Gospel revelation.

This is also why, in my opinion, the human data of a problem do not constitute directly the words of God. They are rather a question coming from man. The word of God, heard in the Gospel, gives a profound answer when the question is asked profoundly.

Dealing as it does with present situations, this catechetical research brings us to the central question of the present word of God and of catechesis as a present encounter of God and man.

This encounter is achieved in the act of catechesis, which is the subject of our fourth part.

## THE ACT OF CATECHESIS

We have spoken of the "data" of revelation. They have an objective dimension, but they must not be "reified." In reality, it is a question of "God who speaks and gives himself to be known." Likewise our study of anthropology and of the ques-

tions which the present situations ask of catechesis has furnished us with "data" about man, to whom revelation is given.

The man we are concerned with is the man who makes an act of faith. Catechesis is the servant of the living encounter between God who speaks and man who listens, knows, responds—or man who seeks and questions and God who answers.

This is why the very foundation of a serious study of pastoral catechetics lies in a good theology of the different acts which come together in the *act of catechesis*: the act of God speaking today, the act of a man thinking together with God, the act of the Church (through the catechist) throwing light upon the signs of divine revelation and (through the catechumen) developing its knowledge of the relations between the plan of God and the many situations of human life.

We already have at our disposal some "renewed" theological studies on the act of revelation and the act of faith, but most of them are still rather obscure about certain essential elements. One may hope that when these lacunae are filled in, there will appear fuller theological studies on the prophetic function of the Church. Let us examine the situation.

During these last years, there have been many treatises on the Word of God, on the fact that God is still speaking to us today, on the role of Jesus Christ and the Church in the transmission of revelation. But to each characteristic of the act of revelation or of tradition there corresponds a characteristic of the act of faith.

Let us note the principal characteristics that have been treated to date: faith is a reading of signs; faith is communion with God who "knows" and who gives himself to be known; faith is participation in the knowing act of Jesus; faith is life in the light of the Holy Spirit. The faith of a Christian is a participation in the faith of the Church; faith is extending a welcome to God and answering his call; faith is a knowledge and an engagement; faith is a conversion of mentality, which ends in a common appreciation of all values and especially in an intimate, reciprocal knowledge in love.

But it seems that we have been too little concerned up to now

with certain elements in the problems of revelation and faith, especially the relations between the Word of God heard in faith and present human experience.

Taken together, the movements which we have mentioned gave birth in theology to a more developed study of *the relations between human experience and divine revelation*.

We mean that special attention is to be devoted to the experiences which we call "privileged," as we have indicated in our article in *Lumen Vitae* (1967, n. 4). The main conclusion can be stated as follows: Since divine revelation was chiefly made known to us in privileged experiences, throughout the history of salvation, catechesis must place men of all times and all ages in contact with the great themes of religious experience as related in the Bible, adopting a suitable introduction in each individual case; it is in any case absolutely essential to place them in contact with the historical life of Jesus, His death and His resurrection.

According to different aspects of the role played by human experience in revelation, it is possible to attempt to discover what might have been the human experience of Jesus himself at a certain state of His own development in knowledge. But above all we must bring to light the religious experience of those who recognize him as the messenger speaking in the name of God.

The type of catechesis which interprets (or "reads") the major signs of revelation in this way, and which points out their valid significance in the present is one we call "type A." We consider the latter to be essential in all Christian formation. But it needs to be completed by a catechesis of the "B type" which interprets the Christian significance of the present situation in reference to Jesus Christ. Here are a few requirements pertaining to the second type "B":

1. Practice a form of thought which recognizes the *unity as well as the distinction* which exists between the different constitutive elements of the situation. This is especially important for questions regarding the *levels of values*.

2. Discover the *significant facts*. Every fact has a certain

signification, but some facts express better than others an important reality. Those which have a great historical import are called "signs of the times."

3. *Do not confound signs and significations.* Significations are not the fruit of a simple observation, but of a certain interpretation.

4. *Discover the values which are at stake* in a given situation.

5. Recognize the possibility of several *interpretations*, according to the different scales of values. Explore the interpretations expressed by different people, in various organs of expression, such as conversations, newspapers, TV.

6. Make a *criticism* of one or several interpretations by means of a moral reflexion which consists *in deepening the problem*, that is to say, placing it in the perspective of the whole of human life, and of its final destiny.

7. In the religious implications of a particular situation, or of a general problem of life, *distinguish* that which is directly a *manifestation of the action of God* and that which is a *question* which God poses to man by placing him in the given circumstances.

In other terms, *certain facts are religious ones* because God explicitly expresses his action in them. The catechesis of a present situation created by such religious facts belongs rather to the type which we described in the preceding chapter. It gives the interpretation of the word which God pronounces in these facts. Vatican II is an example of such a fact.

*Some other facts are profane.* Inasmuch as they belong to creation they have a relationship with God, and inasmuch as they make part of the only real order of existence of which Christ is the center, they are not indifferent to Christianity. But they present themselves directly as a form of the evolution of the world and of human history, in particular as results of human liberty acting in agreement or in disagreement with the will of God. These profane situations constitute then in themselves first of all a question which God poses to man, inviting him to interpret the profane facts in the light of the revelation already given previously, especially in the historical life of Jesus

Christ. For example, the changes in the possibilities of economic production and in transportation invite man to understand in a new way social justice, and to practice it in a Christian spirit.

8. Depend upon a *healthy theology* of relationships which exist between human values and Christian values. It is here especially that it is important to think in terms of a dynamic unity.

There is no separation; no Christian value is realized outside of man; every Christian value is profoundly human. But neither is there any confusion: a human value is not by itself Christian; an act which has a real human value is of itself ambiguous as to its Christian significance. For one should know whether the man who poses that act accepts or not the relationship which God wants to establish in Jesus Christ between the human value which man seeks in his action and communion with God himself. The manner in which man conceives his autonomy (absolute or relative) plays an important role here.

In its positive structure the dynamic unity which exists between human values and Christian values includes the unity and the distinction of levels, as well as the complementarity of roles of parable and of mediation.

9. Practice the *discernment of spirits*. The dynamic unity of which we speak includes the existence of a *double influence* which man experiences continually, notably, that of God, acting in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit on the one hand, and that of evil tendencies which are manifested in the temptations which man experiences both from some of his interior inclinations and from some aspects of his social environment, called the "world." Whoever has a somewhat enlightened experience of the spiritual life knows that the spirit of darkness sometimes presents himself as a spirit of light. And sometimes the action which we are really called to perform seems at first as little or not at all in accord with the manner in which we are accustomed to conceive the will of God.

10. Practice the necessary *re-interpretations* according to the principle of *a profound and dynamic fidelity*.

The re-interpretation of the content must be accompanied by

a reformulation which borrows a terminology better fitting for comprehension. The terminology which suits best will sometimes be brought to the fore during the discussion which seeks to find the most authentically possible Christian interpretation of the situation.

11. Have a sense of the *possible modifications of mentality*: conversion.

12. Have a sense of the *practical organization* of tasks in which the interpretation demands to be put to work.

Normally this supernatural enlightenment operates externally and internally at once, that is, by placing human experience in relation with the revelation already given in external signs. This revelation is an external norm of Christian judgment; and the interior dynamism of faith then comes into action to judge the actual situation according to this norm.

These two movements of faith and of catechesis, like all complementary elements in a developing existence, respond to and perfect each other with an unceasing rhythm. A man who has only an inchoate kind of experience and but a poor interpretation of his existence is incapable of grasping in rich detail the perfection of God. But when revelation has enriched his knowledge of God, and when faith has further enlightened his human experience, he becomes capable of a more perfect knowledge of God, and this in turn purifies his faith.

What has been said of catechetics holds true, analogously, for theology.

Is theology willing to undertake on the level of scientific study what catechetics has already begun to do on the level of popularization? Is theology ready to enlarge the object of its study, not only to interpret revealed data, but also to interpret human life according to the profound meaning given it by revelation? It is here especially that modern catechists ask more light from today's theologians. They desire lectures and articles that will put within their reach the fruit of a more penetrating theological study of all the questions brought up by the Christian interpretation of human existence.

Finally, there is a special aspect of experience that demands

attention in catechesis: the relations between catechumen and catechist, as well as the relations among catechumens in a group. To be sure, the anthropological study of these human relations will already permit a better grasp of the experience itself and the directions in which it can develop. But theology will also have to explain the function of experience in witness, which ought to be a true sign of God speaking today.

### DIALOGUE OF WORK BETWEEN THEOLOGIANS AND CATECHISTS

Catechesis is too important to allow its development to be entrusted to persons of limited doctrinal formation. Of course, in this time of Vatican II we know again and better that the Holy Spirit acts through charisms, and we hope he will scatter charisms of catechesis generously, especially among the most humble workers; but in this same Church there is always a reciprocal influence between the use of charisms and the good coordination of all the ecclesial functions.

For the sake of such a coordination, we regard the following points as urgent:

That the preparation and continual retraining of those who devote themselves to catechesis include the theological study of all the elements essential to their task;

That those who bear the responsibility for theology furnish the practical possibilities for such study;

That theological research be encouraged to bear on the questions asked by catechists, which have not yet received a sufficiently developed answer;

That there be frequent personal contacts, so that theologians may learn the questions that have arisen, and catechists understand the elements of an answer that have already come to light.

In a word, we express our desire for a fruitful dialogue between theologians and catechists.

## 14.

# TASKS OF THE ECCLESIAL COMMUNITY IN THE MODERN WORLD

PAUL RICŒUR

My purpose in this paper is to give an exposition of the motives and reasons for being Christian and for continuing to be Christian in the world of today. I will develop this paper according to three concentric circles, proceeding from the exterior to the interior.

1. As it confronts the technical world, the economic, the social, the political world, what of a special nature can the confessing community say, and what ought it to say? The first question concerns the preaching addressed to all men, the *kerygma* to the world.

2. As it confronts the world of culture and in the actual state of the common language, how can the confessing community understand itself? This second question concerns the internal language of the confessing community, the *didache* (the instruction) to the faithful.

3. Finally, why should the confessing community be a special community—an ecclesial community, in order to support this double preaching—to all men and to the faithful?

## THE CONFESSING COMMUNITY IN A TECHNICAL WORLD

Here I will explain what seems to me to be the irreplaceable function of a confessing community in a type of society such as ours, a society of planning ahead, of rational decision, as well as a society in which technique intrudes into consumption, into leisure, and on all levels of daily life. It seems to me that the *raison d'être* of the churches is to pose continually the question of ends, of *perspective* in a society which is rather *prospective*, to pose the questions of well-being and of "What for?"

This many-sided question touches the profound motivations of man in the society of production, of consumption, and of leisure. This society is characterized by an increasing mastery of man over means, and by an obscuring of his ends, as though the increasing rationality of means revealed progressively the absence of meaning. That is true particularly of capitalist societies where the pressure of publicity and of institutions of credit hands man over to the constant pressure of greed. Thus there appears the ridiculous spiral of the society of production: desire without end. Another vain dream inspires the man in the consumer society: the expansion of his power. At its limit it is a matter of nullifying time, space, the fate of birth and death; but in such a project everything becomes an instrument, a tool, in the universal reign of the manipulable and of the disposable. This project carries us to the yawning chasm of nonsense. And so our modernity sees the growing rationality of society, and at the same time the increasing absurdity of destiny. We discover that men lack not only justice and love; they even lack meaning; the meaninglessness of work, the meaninglessness of leisure, the meaninglessness of sexuality—those are the problems at which we are arriving.

Faced with this situation the task is not one of recrimination and regret, but rather of witness to a fundamental meaning. How? If the word were not suspect or ambiguous I would say: plead for a utopia. By utopia I mean that view of an achieved

humanity, both as the totality of men and as the particular destiny of each person. It is indeed this view which can give meaning: to want that humanity be one, to want it to be realized in each person. It is up to us to press for and bend our efforts towards a double purpose. The first purpose, that of the totality, is what is at stake in all the debates on decolonization, on the search for a generalized economy, on nationalism. The concern is that the needs of humanity taken as a whole should prevail over particularisms and egoisms. But there is another side, that of the anonymity and inhumanity of industrial society, and this side requires that we personalize as much as possible those relationships which are more and more abstract. I say, as did Spinoza: "The more we know singular things the more we know God."

This recourse to a utopia gives me the occasion to make precise the way I view the relation of ethics and politics. I do not believe in the dissolution of ethics into politics. That would be Machiavellianism. Nor do I believe in the direct intervention of ethics into politics. That would be moralism. What I am seeking is the articulation of two levels of morality: the level of the ethics of conviction, and the level of the ethics of responsibility and of power. This means that there is no direct action of Christian preaching on the collective apparatuses; all that is possible is a constant pressure of the utopian demands of Christian preaching on the ethics of responsibility, regulated by what is possible and what is reasonable.

As I see it, the first way of giving an account of my profession of faith is this: in a still exterior way to show the necessity for our modern societies of a tension, of an unending dialectic, between the utopian demand and the reasonable optimum of action which is economic, social, and political. To aim at more, to demand more: this is hope. It always expects more than can be accomplished. We are the depositaries of the abundance of hope beyond what can be foreseen.

It may be asked, "Why are Christians needed for this office?" I do not deny that others also could exercise this effort. I maintain that the Christian has special reasons for doing it; the

proclamation of the death and the resurrection of Christ is for him the decoding of history so that there is testified the abundance of sense over nonsense. In the language of St. Paul, there where sin abounds, grace superabounds. To be Christian is to decipher the signs of this superabundance in the very order where humanity expresses its purpose. The Christian stands as the adversary of the absurd, the prophet of meaning, not by desperate will, but by recognizing that this meaning has been attested in the events which the scriptures proclaim. But the Christian will never have finished working out this meaning in detail.

### THE LANGUAGE OF THE CONFESSING COMMUNITY

Why are we speaking now of language? First, for reasons resulting from the state of the surrounding culture, and second, for reasons internal to Christianity.

With regard to the cultural reasons: all of the anterior problems are problems of signification. Contemporary literature has also shown this. At the moment when the economy and social life are more and more planned, language is called into question by literature, and is handed over to dismemberment; finally, we see that the centre of gravity of the discussion of methodology in the social sciences is shifted towards questions of the thing which is signified and the thing which signifies.

These external reasons resulting from the state of culture and from contemporary discussion touch upon the central question of Christianity—the question of the Word. The believer speaks of the Word of God. Whatever that signifies, man is concerned with it under the aspect of word. It is beginning from a subversion of the Word—Pentecost—that the events which founded Christianity—the cross and the resurrection—became themes of preaching; and the preaching itself is an event of the word which prolongs the account. From this comes the name of

kerygma (announcement, proclamation, good news) which is attached to the breaking of the Christian word into history.

Thus, whether one approaches the matter from the side of contemporary culture or from the side of the internal order of Christian preaching, it is in the area of word that a dialogue is possible between believers and non-believers. Whatever it was that happened in Palestine at the dawn of our era, one thing is certain: "Those things have been told." Christianity is at the very least an event of language, and thereby an event of meaning.

At this point I will say how, as I see it, the confessing community can live this problem of the word. I will say that the confessing community is that place where the problem of the word is lived, thought, and announced as a struggle of religion and of faith.

By "religion" I mean the whole of those objectivizations of the gospel message, objectivizations which are intellectual, cultural, social, and emotional. This objectivization may be understood on two levels: on the mythological level and on the level of rationalization.

First, the mythological level: The preaching of the cross is a scandal and foolishness—foolishness for the intelligent and scandal for the wise. At the same time, it has become a fact of culture in becoming incarnate in what I call the "disposable believable." Each epoch requires a disposable believable; thus, the message of the cross and of the resurrection has been told with the resources of the disposable believable for the man of the hellenistic epoch. This mythological structure appears mainly in the conception of the world, in the cosmology which serves as a frame and as a theatre for the foundation events (for example, regions and locations to which beings are destined, structure of the universe on three levels, heaven, hell and earth, and so forth): signs that have become miracles, statements become objectivized in terms of the empty tomb, apparitions, and so on.

Now this mythological framework did not constitute a scandal for a man of the hellenistic epoch; it has become a scandal for

## TASKS OF THE ECCLESIAL COMMUNITY IN THE MODERN WORLD

us moderns. This scandal is not that which St. Paul calls "The scandal of the cross." Rather, it is a false scandal which, after having conveyed the true scandal, makes it remote from modern man, who no longer lives in the same cultural universe.

The problem of demythologization arises from this point. It arises from our cultural remoteness from the disposable believable of the apostolic age. Thus in order to make us contemporaries of Christ, in order for us to take in the essential message, it is necessary to proceed to a destruction of the letter. (Here I use the word "destruction" in Heidegger's sense —de-construction.) I do not intend by that to suppress the true scandal. On the contrary, the task is to avoid false scandal in order to make manifest to all the true scandal, the original scandal.

The problem is the same on the level of rationalization. During the second age of Christianity, the age of theology, a coherent discourse was elaborated on the basis of the available rationality. This was first Platonism and later Aristotelianism. The first mythological structure was replaced by a hierarchical structure of the intelligible and the sensible, of the eternal and the historical, of contemplation and action. In this way an onto-theology was produced, a mixture of statements about God and statements about being, about essence, about substance. God was thought of as the thinker who thinks himself, as the first mover, as the locale of intelligibles, as the supreme watchmaker, as the absolute mathematician, and so on. Now the cultural process which we are living is characterized by the de-construction of the ontological discourse which originated from Plato. I do not by any means believe that the ontological question is out of date. On the contrary, the task is, with Heidegger, to rediscover being as parousia, as presence, beyond the debacle of the objectivizations in essence, in substance, and in all of the reifications of the intelligible, of the eternal.

I have just spoken of objectivizations in the order of mythological discourse and then in the order of rational, or rationalized, discourse. These are only partial aspects of a total objectivization which affects social and daily existence as well. The

preceding objectivizations merely give an expression in language to this total objectivization. I am speaking of a division in the life of culture between the sphere of the profane and the sphere of the sacred. It is there, perhaps, that we find the essence of the religious. And it is here that Christianity is originally a transgression, a transgression of the frontier, of the barrier. One recalls as examples the episodes of the transgression of the sabbath. Already in the Old Testament the desacralization of the Babylonian and Canaanite religious world was inaugurated (for example, the narration of creation, the battle against idols, the preaching of Second Isaias against gods made by human hands, and so on). But what happened on the level of discourse happened also on the socio-cultural level. Christianity, born of subversion of religion, reconstructed an objective sacred order and rediscovered the old opposition between religious and secular in a series of objectivizations and separations.

It would be necessary to extend this critique of objectivization to the heart of emotional structures: the sacred as fear. Here lies the affective source of objectivization. As the ancient Epicurus had already said, it is in the first place fear which makes gods. It seems to me that the reinterpretation of the faith is today bound to the reconstitution and assumption of a critique of religion which is not confined to intellectual objectivizations, nor even to social-cultural objectivization, but which takes place on the anthropological level, I mean on the level of the genesis of man—not, of course, of his biological genesis, but of the genesis of the meaning of man as man.

Now our modern culture offers us a new style of criticism of religion, a criticism which takes place precisely on this level of the genesis of man. In the last analysis it is this which is of value in Marx, in Nietzsche, and in Freud. It matters little that the first tied his critique to a largely unscientific political economy, that the second tied his critique to a pseudo-biology, and that the third stopped short at a skeletal critique of the neurotic aspects of religion. There is something new to assume, something which constitutes the essential part of what one can call the process of demystification—if the word is not already

tarnished—but I will keep the word because of the association with demythologization.

Demystification is the work of unbelief. Demythologization is the work of faith. In my faith I seek their connection. What is proper to this process? It is the central problem of illusion, in a sense not covered by the epistemological notion of error nor by the moral notion of the lie. It is rather a matter of the birth of a false conscience, of a bad conscience, by means of ideologies and of ideas. It is a cultural structure which crops up not only in the common conscience but also in the individual conscience. It is to this structure that the three authors cited above have applied a critique of a new type, a distrustful and reductive exegesis which unmasks and denounces. We can even speak in their regard of a destruction in the sense of de-construction. Thus one brings to light the interplay of hidden motivations, whether they are bound up with the situation of classes (domination and submission), with the force of weakness of the will for power, or with cultural taboos linked with the father-figure.

I believe, with Bonhoeffer and others, that from now on the critique of religion as a weakness of man belongs to the matured faith of modern man. In this sense I will say that a certain atheism concerning the gods of men belong henceforth to any possible faith. But it is the very movement of faith which demands the appropriation and incorporation of the critique of religion as mask—mask of fear, mask of hate.

How can we bind together a critique of religion and a re-interpretation of the faith? It is here that one must take up again the question of *meaning* which we have considered from the exterior point of view in the first section of this paper and left on the technical, social, and political level.

Christian preaching takes place at the junction of destruction and reinterpretation. This implies a struggle to listen to a word, a word which is much more addressed to me rather than uttered by me. Furthermore, Christian preaching is not only the resumption of the critique of religion by modern man, the resumption of his modernity. It is also a critique of his critique and a critique of his criteria. For one and the same critique of re-

ligion expresses at once the conquest of the truth and also the progressive forgetting at the heart of modernity. It is this double meaning which causes the ambiguity of modernity. Modernity is the cultural milieu in which the forgetfulness takes place, forgetfulness of those things expressed through religious language when it speaks of being created, of being lost, of being saved. We are remote not only from the cultural expressions of the kerygma, but also from what the kerygma says. That is why demythologization and demystification are characteristics both of the progress of purification and the progress of forgetting. Again, that is why we must struggle with the presuppositions of modern man himself, with the presuppositions of his modernity.

To preach is not to surrender to what is believable or unbelievable for modern man, but to struggle with his unbelief. This signifies several things: first, to restore the area of inquiry within which the question can have sense. Here the problem of myth takes on a new aspect. It is no longer only a mask to be penetrated, but a symbolic expression to be reinterpreted. It has a pre-discursive value, a pre-comprehensive value. It is important, then, to recover the symbolic dimension of the myth, while challenging its character of pseudo-knowledge. It is by means of this recovery that we can recreate a milieu of language in which the question of origin, the question of the integrity of existence, would be indirectly signified.

This recovery of the symbolic dimension points out that the task of interpretation today is twofold: to reduce illusions and to restore symbolic meaning. It is here that we find that language is our field of battle, our area of conflict. For language itself is the place where the forgetting happens. There are constituted the languages of signs, the languages of logic, where the power of language to call to man, to open up possibilities, is forgotten. To open up possibilities: the possibility of existing as man, of unfolding a history. It is the battle against this forgetting which moves me to keep not only the logical and technical languages which objectivize, but also the language which comprehends. Alongside of the technical languages by which I dispose of

everything I keep the language which arouses possibilities. I would see this as a function of a theology very close to exegesis—of a theology not bound up with the objectivizing ontology which derived from Plato and Aristotle (or rather, from Platonism and Aristotelianism)—to provide a rallying point, a centre of gravitation, for the partial and hostile exegeses of Freudian psychoanalysis and the phenomenology of religion.

To destroy and to interpret: these are the two faces of modern exegesis. For the Christian the destroying belongs to the act of listening. What we want is through this process of destruction to hear a more original and a more originating word. That is to say, we want to let it speak, that language of which I have just said that it has been addressed to us rather than spoken by us. This language I call the language of establishing. Its function is to open up, to inaugurate a *possibility* of existence.

I insist on this word “possibility,” for it has two opposites. On the one hand it is opposed to the necessity of a determined world towards which all mystifications, in the last analysis, tend. One cannot fail to be struck by the Spinozist accent of Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud. They speak to us of a “comprehended necessity,” “the love of destiny,” “the principle of reality.” Certainly I admire this ascetics of necessity. In many respects it is necessary to have brushed against its seductiveness. But there is something more, something better, and that is the grace of imagination, the grace of the possible, the grace of upheaval. That is how I respond with the Kierkegaardian part of myself to this Spinozist myth of totality and necessity. I try to comprehend that man is always aroused in his mythical-poetic core, created and recreated by a word which generates him.

The profound meaning of revelation is this awakening and this summons, at the heart of existence, of the imagination of the possible.

But the possible is opposed even more fundamentally to the impossible. The way of the absurd is man’s way of impossibility. For me the meaning of the cross and of the resurrection is precisely that man is possible, that is to say, not impossible.

I would like to end this second part with some formulas which are intentionally brief:

1. For us moderns the critique of religion belongs to the interpretation and reinterpretation of the language of the faith. It is possible that we belong to a post-religious age of faith. This means that the dialogue of the believer and the atheist is no longer a dialogue with another, but a dialogue with oneself.

2. For me, to integrate the critique of religion in the movement of the faith means to bind the external critique of religion—that which unbelief applies to religion—to the internal critique of religion—that which faith itself exercises over religion. I call the first “demystification” and the second “demythologization.” It is in demythologizing the faith that I can, at the same time, assume in it the movement of demystification.

3. Demystification and demythologization are the reverse side of a construction of meaning. This is the positive function of hermeneutics, its function of setting up, of establishing man. It consists in this, that the possibility of man might be called forth by a word which gives that which it says.

## APOLOGIA FOR THE ECCLESIAL COMMUNITY

It remains for me to give my reasons for adhering to a church community and even, more precisely, to a confession.

I know very well all that can be said against this adherence: the lack of sociological adaptation of the parish to this age of large grouping and great movements of population, the imperviousness of the ecclesiastical milieu to the great happenings of the world, its tendency to take refuge from any critical process, whether it comes from without or within.

Nevertheless, in my estimation the reasons for adherence carry great weight. To begin with, I do not believe that the subject of faith can be an individual. The subject of faith is not “I” but “we.” Placed outside of a confessing community, the process of criticism and reinterpretation becomes what Kant called

"erudite exegesis" and, at its extreme, a mere exercise in logic.

The fact is that interpretation can only be a segment of tradition, that is to say, of the transmission of the message in the history of the community. The word does not arouse man unless it continues to be transmitted. This is why preaching can be understood only as directed to a number of persons.

If a confessing community does not take up the work of interpretation, then the dialectic that we have described in the first part of this paper will correspondingly die. The dialectic of conviction and responsibility needs to be supported by the concrete dialectic of the ecclesial and social. The idea that the church ought to lose itself in the world even to the point of disappearing seems to me to be devoid of sense; for if the church is lost there is nothing further to be lost. It is the function not only of preaching but also of worship to maintain an internal milieu thanks to which it is possible to have an external church-world relationship. The case is the same here as in the matter of language. If in our language the tension between poetry and prose were to disappear our language would be destroyed. It is the same in the case of the health of the social body. If the prose of technical action on all its levels (economic, social, political) should cease to be bound to the poetry of cult, all the dialectic of conviction and responsibility would break down. The ethics of conviction comes to birth in a ritual action, in a symbolic gesture, where it preserves its non-technical character, its creative character, its power of establishing on the level of the fundamental images of man, on the level of his mythical-poetical core.

It is the health of the ecclesial body which governs the quality of church-world relations; there is no external equilibrium without an internal equilibrium. It seems to me that this is the ultimate meaning of the preaching of Israel on the "small remnant," or of the Gospel preaching of the "salt of the earth," "the leaven in the dough," "the lamp in the darkness," and so on. It is always a matter of a dialectic of the exterior and the interior, a dialectic which becomes exhausted if there is no

longer a specificity of the interior, no longer tension with the exterior.

Finally, I would go so far as to say that the existence of a confessing community is necessary to live integrally the struggle of religion and of faith. I simply do not think that faith could exist without a renewal and constant correction of the religious vehicle. From the beginning the faith of Israel is a battle against religion, in and by religion. The battle for the name of Yahweh against the idols of the Baals, the battle for an ethics of service against the holocausts and sacrifices unfolds across institutions which are at the same time the obstacle and the vehicle of preaching. More radically still, the cult of the church is the place where religion continually dies, where this death is lived as self-suppression. Without the church's cult, the death of religion is no more than a platitude. Irreligion then becomes non-faith, non-faith of man handed over to the well-being and the non-meaning of his modernity.

In brief, the church is, for me, the place where I can most authentically live the dialectic between conviction and responsibility, the dialectic between the death of religion and the reinterpretation of the faith.

## 15.

# RELATIONSHIP OF CHURCH AND WORLD IN THE LIGHT OF A POLITICAL THEOLOGY

JOHANNES B. METZ

THE subject of this paper requires development under two considerations: one, reflecting on the meaning and the task of "political theology (1), the other, investigating the relations between Church and world in the light of this "political theology" (2).

## 1.

The notion of political theology is ambiguous, hence exposed to misunderstanding, because it has been burdened with specific historical connotations. However, in view of the time at my disposal, I must refrain from historical clarifications here. May I then ask you to understand this paper on political theology in the way I shall use this notion in what follows; in using it, I shall attempt to elucidate its meaning. I understand political theology, first of all, to be a critical correction of present-day theology inasmuch as this theology shows an extreme privatizing tendency (a tendency, that is, to centre upon the private person rather than "public," "political" society). At the same time, I understand this political theology to be a positive attempt to

formulate the eschatological message under the conditions of our present society.

1. Let me first explain the function of political theology as a *critical corrective* of modern theology. I shall begin with a few *historical reflections*.

The unity and coordination of religion and society, of religious and societal existence, in former times acknowledged as an unquestionable reality, shattered as early as the beginning of the Enlightenment in France. This was the first time that the Christian religion appeared to be a particular phenomenon within a pluralistic milieu. Thus its absolute claim to universality seemed to be historically conditioned. This problematic situation is also the immediate foundation of the critique developed by the Enlightenment and, later, by Marxism. From the beginning this critique took on the shape in which it still appears today. It approaches religion as an ideology, seeking to unmask it as a function, as the ideological superstructure of definite societal usages and power structures. The religious subject is being denounced as a false consciousness, that is, it is viewed as an element of society which has not yet become aware of itself. If a theology seeks to meet such a critique, it must uncover the socio-political implications of its ideas and notions. Now—and here I am conscious of a daring simplification—classic metaphysical theology failed to discharge its responsibilities in this quarrel. The reason is that its notions and categories were all founded upon the supposition that there is no problem between religion and society, between faith and societal practice. As long as this supposition was true, it was indeed possible for a purely metaphysical interpretation of religion to be societally relevant, such as was the case, for instance, in the Middle Ages with its great theologians. However, when this unity was broken, this metaphysical theology got itself into a radical crisis as the theoretical attorney in the pending case between the Christian message of salvation and socio-political reality.

The prevailing theology of recent years, a theology of transcendental, existential personalist orientation is well aware of the

problematic situation created by the Enlightenment. We might even say that, in a certain sense, it originated as a reaction against this situation. Still this reaction was not direct and sustained: the societal dimension of the Christian message was not given its proper importance but, implicitly or explicitly, treated as a secondary matter. In short, the message was "privatized" and the practice of faith reduced to the timeless decision of the person. This theology sought to solve its problem, a problem born of the Enlightenment, by eliminating it. It did not pass through the Enlightenment, but jumped over it and thought thus to be done with it. The religious consciousness formed by this theology attributes but a shadowy existence to the socio-political reality. The categories most prominent in this theology are the categories of the intimate, the private, the apolitical sphere. It is true that these theologians strongly emphasize charity and all that belongs to the field of interpersonal relations; yet, from the beginning, and as though there were no questions, they regard charity only as a private virtue with no political relevance; it is a virtue of the I-Thou relation, extending to the field of interpersonal encounter, or at best to charity on the scale of the neighbourhood. The category of encounter is predominant; the proper religious way of speaking is the interpersonal address; the dimension of proper religious experience is the apex of free subjectivity, of the individual or the indisposable, the silent centre of the I-Thou relation. It seems clear then that the forms of transcendental existential and personalist theology, currently predominant, have one thing in common: the trend to the private.

I should like to cast further light on this tendency which I have called a privatizing tendency. Let us look at the results of modern *Formgeschichte* and the way they are interpreted by modern theology. It is well known that the Gospels' intention is not to present a biography of Jesus in the current sense of the word; their account of Jesus does not belong to the genus of private biography, but to the genus of public proclamation—of kerygma—which is the form in which the Christian message of salvation couches its assertions. The exegetical studies in so-

called *Formgeschichte* have shown that the Gospels are a multi-layered text in which the message is proclaimed in the aforesaid way. Now it seems to me that it was, in a certain sense, a fateful event when the discoveries and conclusions of *Formgeschichte* were at once interpreted in the categories of theological existentialism and personalism. This meant that the understanding of the kerygma was immediately limited to the intimate sphere of the person; briefly, it was privatized. Its word was taken merely as a word addressed to the person, as God's personal self-communication, not as a promise given to men, to society. The hermeneutics of the existential interpretation of the New Testament proceeds within the closed circuit of the I-Thou relation. Hence the necessity to critically deprivatize the understanding of the datum of our theology. *The deprivatizing of theology is the primary critical task of political theology.*

This deprivatizing, it seems to me, is in a way as important as the program of demythologizing. At least it should have a place with a legitimate demythologizing. Otherwise there is a danger of relating God and salvation to the existential problem of the person, of reducing them to the scale of the person, and so of downgrading the eschatological kerygma to a symbolic paraphrase of the metaphysical questionableness of man and his personal private decisions.

No doubt there is an emphasis on the individual in the message of the New Testament. We might even say that it is the gist of this message—especially in its Pauline expression—to place the individual before God. When we insist on deprivatizing, we do not in the least object to this orientation. On the contrary, for it is our contention that theology, precisely because of its privatizing tendency, is apt to miss the individual in his real existence. Today this existence is to a very great extent entangled in societal vicissitudes; so any existential and personal theology that does not understand existence as a political problem in the widest sense of the word, must inevitably restrict its considerations to an abstraction. A further danger of such a theology is that, failing to exercise its critical and controlling function, it delivers faith up to modern ideologies in the

area of societal and political theory. Finally, an ecclesiastical religion, formed in the light of such a privatizing theology, will tend more and more to be a "rule without ruling power, a decision without deciding power. It will be a rule for those who are willing to accept it, so long as no one gives it a knock; it will not be a rule inasmuch as no other impulse will proceed from it but the impulse to self-reproduction."<sup>1</sup>

2. With this, the *positive task* of political theology comes to light. It is, to determine anew the relation between religion and society, between Church and societal "publicness," between eschatological faith and societal life; and, it should be added, "determine" is not used here in a "precritical" sense—that is, with the intention of *a priori* identifying these two realities—but "post-critically" in the sense of a "*second reflection*." Theology, insofar as it is political theology, is obliged to establish this "second degree reflection," when it comes to formulate the eschatological message under the conditions of the present situation of society. Hence let me briefly describe the characteristics both of this situation, that is, how it should be understood, and of the biblical message, which is the determining factor of this theological political reflection.

(a) I shall explain the situation from which today's theological reflection takes its *starting point*, by referring to a problem raised by the Enlightenment and which, at least since Marx, has become unavoidable. This problem may, in an abbreviated formula, be presented thus: according to Kant, a man is enlightened only when he has the freedom to make public use of his reason in all affairs. Hence the realization of this enlightenment is never a merely theoretical problem, but essentially a political one, a problem of societal conduct. In other words, it is linked with such socio-political suppositions as render enlightenment possible. Only he is enlightened who, *at the same time*, fights to realize those socio-political presuppositions that offer the possibility of publicly using reason. When, therefore,

<sup>1</sup> A. Gehlen, quoted from H. Schelsky, *Auf der Suche nach Wirklichkeit*, Düsseldorf, 1965, p. 271.

reason aims at political freedom and, consequently, theoretical, transcendental reason appears within practical reason, rather than the reverse, a deprivatization of reason is absolutely necessary. Every "pure" theory, whether it be stressed or even overstressed, is nothing but a relapse into a precritical consciousness. For it is clear that the subject's critical claims cannot be sustained as "mere" theory. A new relation between theory and practice, between knowledge and morality, between reflection and revolution, will have to be worked out, and it will have to determine theological thought, if theological thought is not to be left at a precritical stage. Henceforth, practical and, in the widest sense of the word, political reason must take part in all critical reflections in theology. More and more, practical political reason will be the centre of the classical discussion of the relation between *fides* and *ratio*, and the problem of the responsibility of faith will find the key to its solution, again, in practical public reason. Properly speaking, the so-called fundamental hermeneutic problem of theology is not the problem of how systematic theology stands in relation to historical theology, how dogma stands in relation to history, but what is the relation between theory and practice, between understanding the faith and social practice. If the task of political reflection in theology, as emerging from the present situation, is to be characterized summarily, it might best be done in the way we have just indicated. This also shows that our intention is not, once again, to mix faith and "politics" in a reactionary manner. Rather, it is to actualize the critical potential of faith in regard to society.

(b) *Biblical tradition*, in its turn, obliges us to undertake this "second reflection" on the relation between eschatological faith and societal action. Why? Because salvation, the object of the Christian faith in hope, is not private salvation. Its proclamation forced Jesus into a mortal conflict with the public powers of his time. His cross is not found in the intimacy of the individual, personal heart, nor in the sanctuary of a purely religious devotion. It is erected beyond these protected and separated precincts, "outside," as the theology of the Epistle to the Hebrews tells us. The curtain of the temple is torn forever. The scandal and the promise of this salvation are public matters. This

"publicness" cannot be retracted nor dissolved, nor can it be attenuated. It is a recognizable fact attending the message of salvation as it moves through history. In the service of this message, Christian religion has been charged with a public responsibility to criticize and to liberate. "All the authors of the New Testament"—I am quoting the well-known biblical scholar, H. Schlier<sup>2</sup>—"are convinced that Christ is not a private person and the Church is not a private association. They tell us of Christ's and his witnesses' encounter with the political world and its authorities. None of them has given more fundamental importance to this aspect of the history of Jesus than the apostle John. To him it is a lawsuit, which the world, represented by the Jews, brings against Jesus and his witnesses. This suit was brought to its public judicial conclusion before Pontius Pilate, the representative of the Roman Empire and the holder of the political power." Provided it is not read with the eyes of Bultmann, John's account of the passion is organized around this scene. The scene before Pilate is heavy with symbolism.

Political theology seeks to make contemporary theologians aware that a trial is pending between the eschatological message of Jesus and the socio-political reality. It insists on the permanent relation to the world inherent in the salvation merited by Jesus, a relation not to be understood in a natural-cosmological but in a socio-political sense: that is, as a critical, liberating force in regard to the social world and its historical process.

It is impossible to privatize the eschatological promises of biblical tradition: liberty, peace, justice, reconciliation. Again and again they force us to assume our responsibilities towards society. No doubt, these promises cannot simply be identified with any condition of society, however we may determine and describe it from our point of view. The history of Christianity has had enough experience of such direct identification and direct "politifications" of the Christian promises. In such cases, however, the "eschatological proviso," which makes every historically real status of society appear to be provisional, was

<sup>2</sup> *Besinnung auf das Neue Testament*, Freiburg, 1964, p. 193; this theme is developed further by Schlier, *Die Zeit der Kirche*, Freiburg, 1956, p. 310.

being abandoned. Note that I say "provisional," not "arbitrary." This eschatological proviso does not mean that the present condition of society is not valid. It *is* valid, but in the "eschatological meanwhile." It does not bring about a negative but a critical attitude to the societal present. Its promises are not an empty horizon of religious expectations; neither are they only a regulative idea. They are, rather, a critical liberating imperative for our present times. These promises stimulate and appeal to us to make them a reality in the present historical condition and, in this way, to verify them—for we must "veri-fy" them. The New Testament community knew at once that it was called to live out the coming promise under the conditions of what was their "now," and so to overcome the world. Living in accord with the promise of peace and justice implies an ever-renewed, ever-changing work in the "now" of our historical existence. This brings us, forces us, to an ever-renewed, critical, liberating position in face of the extant conditions of the society in which we live. Jesus' parables—to mention another biblical detail in this context—are parables of the kingdom of God but, *at the same time*, they instruct us to submit to a renewed critical relationship to our world. *Every eschatological theology, therefore, must become a political theology, that is, a (socio-)critical theology.*

## 2.

We come now to the second part of this paper where we shall consider the concrete relation between the Church and the world in the light of political theology. The scope of this theology does not allow "world" to be understood in the sense of cosmos, in opposition to existence and person, nor as a merely existential or personal reality. It requires it to be understood as a societal reality, viewed in its historical becoming. In this context, "Church" is not a reality beside or over this societal reality; rather, it is an institution *within* it, criticizing it, having a critical liberating task in regard to it. Let me explain in detail the implications of this statement.

1. If formed by the eschatological promises, faith again and again takes on a critical task with regard to the society in which the faithful live. This was the conclusion of our considerations on political theology. The question now is: Can this task be left to the individual believer? Will he be able to perform it authoritatively and effectively? Is it not, therefore, precisely this *critical* task of faith which, in a new way, raises the problem of institutionalizing faith? It is easy to admit ideas, even to propagate them, when they agree with the needs of the time, or a certain order of culture and society. But what if they are critically contradicting these needs and, at the same time, left to the judgment of the individual?<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that the institution and the institutionalization considered here are in no way repressive; on the contrary, they are assisting the formation of a new critical consciousness. It is to be asked whether it is not necessary for faith to be institutionalized so that the faithful take on their responsibility of critical liberty in the face of today's society. If this is necessary, are we not obliged to work out a new understanding of the ecclesiastical institution? Would the Church not then be necessary as the *institution of the critical liberty of faith?*

2. If the Church is tentatively so defined, then two objections come immediately to the fore.

(a) There is, first, the question of *principle*: Can an institution as such have the task of criticism? After all, would not "institutionalized criticism" be like squaring the circle? Is not institution by its nature something anti-critical? Hence is it not going to utopian limits to postulate this "second order institution," which is not only the object but also the subject of critical liberty and which, therefore, has to make possible and to secure this criticism? In this context, I can only answer briefly by posing a question in reply. Is it not, on the contrary, the specific note of the religious institution of the Church to be, and even to have to be, the subject of this critical liberty? As institution the Church herself lives under the eschatological proviso. She is not for herself; she does not serve her own self-affirmation,

<sup>3</sup> See A. Gehlen, *Anthropologische Forschung*, Hamburg, 1961, p. 76.

but the historical affirmation of the salvation of all men. The hope she announces is not a hope for herself but for the kingdom of God. As institution, the Church truly lives on the proclamation of her own proviso. And she must realize this eschatological stipulation in that she establishes herself as the institution of critical liberty, in the face of society and its absolute and self-sufficient claims.

(b) But, granted that in this way our first objection is answered, there is still one additional critical question addressed to the Church: What is the *historical and social basis of her critical task*? When was the Church truly an institution of critical liberty? When was she in fact critically revolutionary? When was she not simply counter-revolutionary, resentful, and nagging in her relation to the societal world? Did not the Church often neglect to speak her critical word, or come out with it too late? Did she not again and again appear to others as the ideological superstructure of societal relations and power constellation, and has she, indeed, always been able, with her own strength, to confound such accusation? Take recent centuries: is it not true that, more and more, religious institution and critical reflection have become incompatible things, so much so that, today, there is a theological reflection that ignores institution and an institution that ignores reflection? Where then is the historical and social basis of the claim made when defining the Church as a critical institution in the face of society? This objection is valid. There is hardly one idea of critical societal importance in our history—take Revolution, Enlightenment, Reason, or again—Love, Liberty—which was not at least once disavowed by historical Christianity and its institutions. No theory, no retrospective reinterpretation is of any help. If anything is to help here, it will be new ways of thinking and acting in the Church. May we hope for this? I think we may. All that follows is supported by this confidence.

3. In what does the *critical liberating function of the Church*, in view of our society and its historical process, now consist? Which are the elements of that creative negation which make the progress of society to be progress at all? I should like, with-

out pretending to either a systematic or a complete presentation, to specify a few of these critical tasks of the Church.

(a) In virtue of its eschatological proviso in the face of every abstract idea of progress and of humanity, the Church protects the individual man, living here and now, from being considered exclusively as matter and means for the building of a completely rationalized technological future. The Church contradicts the practice that would see individuality only as the function of society's progress technically directed. It is true that even our societal utopias may contain a positive notion of the individual; still he is of value only inasmuch as he is the first to inaugurate new societal possibilities, in other words, inasmuch as he in himself anticipates the revolutionary social change that is to come, and inasmuch as he now is what everybody will have to be later. But then, what about the poor and the oppressed? Are they not poor because they are unable to be first in the sense just explained? In this case, it is the Church's task, in virtue of the eschatological proviso and with all her institutionalized, socio-critical power, to protect the individual against being taken as a number on a human-progress-computor-card.

(b) It seems to me that a further point in this criticism is the following: today more than ever, when the Church is faced with the modern political systems, she must emphasize her critical, liberating function again and again, to make it clear that man's history as a whole stands under God's eschatological proviso. She must stress the truth that history as a whole can never be a political notion in the strict sense of the word, that for this reason, it can never be made the object of a particular political action. There is no subject of universal history one can point to in this world, and whenever a party, a group, a nation, or a class sought to see itself as such a subject, thereby making the whole of history to be the scope of its political action, it inevitably grew into a totalitarian ideology.<sup>4</sup>

(c) Lastly, it seems to me that, especially in this day, the Church must mobilize that critical potency that lies in her central tradition of Christian love. Indeed it is not permissible to

<sup>4</sup> On this matter, See H. Lübbe, "Herrschaft und Planung," *Die Frage nach dem Menschen*, Freiburg and Munich, 1966, pp. 188-211.

restrict love to the interpersonal sphere of the I-Thou. Nor is it enough to understand love as charitable work within a neighbourhood. We must interpret love, and make it effective, in its societal dimension. This means that love should be the unconditional determination to bring justice, liberty, and peace *to the others*. Thus understood, love contains a socio-critical dynamism that can be viewed in two ways.

*First:* Love postulates a determined criticism of pure power. It does not allow us to think in the categories of "friend-enemy," for it obliges us to love our enemies and even to include them within the universal orbit of hope. Of course the Church, which calls herself the Church of love, will be able to express a credible and efficient criticism of pure power only if, and to the extent that, she herself does not appear in the accoutrements of power. The Church cannot and must not desire to press her point by means of political power. After all, she does not work for the affirmation of herself, but for the historical affirmation of salvation for all. She has no power prior to the power of her promises; this is an eminently critical proposition! It urges the Church on, again and again, to a passionate criticism of pure power; it points an accusing finger at her when—and how often has this been the case in history—her criticism of the powerful of this world was too weak, or came too late, or when she was hesitant in protecting all those, without distinction of persons, who were persecuted or threatened, and when she did not passionately stand up and fight whenever and wherever man was being treated contemptuously by man. This criticism of power would not oblige Christians to withdraw from the exercise of political power in every case. Such a withdrawal, if it were a matter of principle, could be a sin against love, for Christians possess in their very faith and its tradition, a principle of criticism of power.

*Second:* The socio-critical dynamism of love points in yet another direction. If love is actualized as the unconditional determination to freedom and justice for the others, there might be circumstances where love itself could demand actions of a *revolutionary character*. If the status quo of a society contains

as much injustice as would probably be caused by a revolutionary upheaval, a revolution in favour of freedom and justice for the sake of "the least of our brothers" would be permissible even in the name of love. Therefore, we should not underestimate the seriousness of Merleau-Ponty's remark that no Church has ever been seen supporting a revolution for the sole reason that it appeared to be just. At this point it becomes clear once more, that the socio-critical task of the Church becomes the task of criticizing religion and Church as well. The two go together like the two faces of a coin.

4. The socio-critical function brings about a change in the Church herself. Ultimately, indeed, its objective is a *new self-understanding* of the Church and a *transformation of her institutional attitudes towards modern society*. Let me say a few words about this point of political theology. We started by considering that, not only the individual, but the Church as institution is the subject of a critical attitude with regard to society. There are several reasons for this. One of these springs from the general philosophy and sociology of modern critical consciousness. It points to the *aporiae* in which the critical individual finds himself when faced with this society and its anonymous structures. Criticism, therefore, must be institutionalized and a "second order institution," which can be bearer and guardian of critical freedom, is necessary. But there is a question: Is the Church such a "second order institution"? In her present form she is not; but I dare to say, she is *not yet*. How, then, and under what conditions will she be such an institution? Are there signs that she will be such? I shall add a few remarks on this point.

(a) What happens—this is our first question—when the Church today makes a concrete socio-critical assertion? She has attempted to do so, for instance, in some passages of the pastoral constitution of the last Council and, even more clearly and decidedly, in the encyclical *Populorum Progressio*. What exactly did happen when these assertions were made? At this point the Church was obliged to take into account and to elaborate data which did not simply result from inner ecclesiasti-

cal theological reflection. Hence these socio-political pronouncements bring to life new, non-theological resources. The Church must receive such data in order to fulfill her mission to the world, which is not merely, not simply, to reproduce herself. All this will not fail to dissolve an uncritical, monolithic consciousness within the ecclesiastical institution. Moreover, the novelty of these data, which indeed are the foundation of new ecclesiastical pronouncements, requires *a new mode of speaking in the Church*. Assertions founded on such data cannot be expressed simply as a doctrine. The courage is needed to formulate hypotheses suitable to contingent situations. Directives have to be issued which are neither weak and vague suggestions nor doctrinal-dogmatic teachings. This necessity of today's Church to speak out concretely and critically brings about, at the same time, a sort of demythologizing and deritualizing in her speech and conduct. For it is evident that the ecclesiastical institution is now undergoing a new experience: it must bear contradiction. Its decisions cannot avoid taking one side and therefore being provisional and risky. If this institution learns the new language, it will no longer encumber the societal initiative of individual Christians with doctrinal rigidity; although, on the other hand, it will also remove arbitrariness from their initiative.

(b) A *further* point comes to mind immediately. Ecclesiastical criticism of society can ultimately be credible and efficient only if it is supported more and more by a *critical public opinion within the Church* herself. If not this public opinion, what else is to be on guard, lest the Church, as institution, become an illustration of the very conditions which she criticizes in others? It should be noted, however, that, because of lack of data, it is difficult today to give a detailed account of this critical public opinion. I shall at least enumerate some of its tasks. One of them is to interpose a veto, whenever the ecclesiastical institution oversteps the boundaries of its competence. Here I have in mind the case where the authorities attempt by institutional measures to carry through their own decisions in a matter of socio-political or economic relevance. Another of these tasks is the criticism of the inner ecclesiastical milieu: I am thinking of

the fact that, within the Church, certain mentalities prevail—usually, middle class mentality—while others are thought to be irrelevant and, as it were, pushed to the background, out of the glare of the spotlight. A criticism of these uncontrolled yet powerful prejudices should be the object of public opinion. A further critical task is to show the historical conditioning and the change of the societal notions in the Church herself; the change of ideas is not always synchronous with the facts, it is less easy to see but, nonetheless real. It is also important—this is still another example of public criticism—to denounce the Church's struggle on wrong battle fronts, if necessary. The skill sometimes spent in the defence of certain social positions would, indeed, be sufficient for radical and courageous change. And again, why is it that Christianity seems to have relatively little to say in matters of reconciliation and toleration? Finally, why is it that the Church does not appear unmistakably and effectively as the one institution in which certain sociological prejudices are not admitted: for instance, racism, nationalism, and whatever ways there are to express contempt for other men? These indications may suffice here. The courage to build up such a critical public opinion can, no doubt, be drawn only from the confident hope that there will be a certain change of the institutional customs of the Church. But this confidence is perhaps one of the most important concrete features of membership in the Church today.

(c) One last remark: in the pluralistic society it cannot be the socio-critical attitude of the Church to proclaim one positive societal order as an absolute norm. It can only consist in effecting within this society a critical, liberating freedom. The Church's task here is not the elaboration of a system of social doctrine, but of social criticism. The Church is a particular institution in society, yet presents a universal claim; if this claim is not to be an ideology, it can only be formulated and urged as *criticism*. Two important aspects may be pointed out on this basis. In the first place, it is clear now why the Church, being a socio-critical institution, will not, in the end, come out with a political ideology. No political party can establish itself merely

as such a criticism; no political party can take as its object of political action that which is the scope of the ecclesiastical criticism of society, namely, the whole of history standing under God's eschatological proviso. And in the second place, one can see now, again on the basis of the Church's critical function with regard to society, how cooperation with other non-Christian institutions and groups is possible in principle. The basis of such a cooperation between Christians and non-Christians, between men and groups of even the widest ideological differences, cannot primarily be a positive determination of the societal progress or a definite objective opinion of what the future free society of men will be. In the realm of these positive ideas there will always be differences and pluralism.

This pluralism in the positive design of society cannot be abolished within the conditions of our history if complete manipulation is not to replace its free realisation. In view, therefore, of the afore-mentioned cooperation, there is a negative, critical attitude and experience to which we should pay our chief attention: the experience of the threat to humanity, that is, the experience of freedom, justice, and peace being threatened. We should not underestimate this negative experience. There is to it an elementary positive power of mediation. Even if we cannot directly and immediately agree as to the positive content of freedom, peace, and justice, yet we have a long and common experience with their contraries, the lack of freedom, justice, and peace. This negative experience offers us a chance for consensus, less in regard to the positive aspect of the freedom and justice we are seeking, than in regard to our critical resistance against the dread and terror of no freedom and no justice. The solidarity which grows out of this experience offers the possibility of a common front of protest. This must be grasped; this must be exploited. The danger of new wars is too close. The irrationalities of our actions in the social and political field are too manifest. There is still with us the possibility that "collective darkness" will descend upon us. The danger of losing freedom, justice, and peace is, indeed, so great, that indifference in these matters would be a crime.

## 16.

# THE SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION AND THE RENEWAL OF THEOLOGY

FERNAND DUMONT

FOR about thirty years, sociological research has occupied an important place in the life of the Church and in Christian thought. At first there was hesitation: it is not so long ago that sociology was accused of "having submitted the Holy Spirit to its standard." These quarrels now seem to be over. Perhaps a little too easily! For my part, I feel that sociology has not been accepted without being generally confined to the periphery of fundamental theological inquiry. In any case, one cannot deny that the dialogue was carried on especially at the pastoral level. Moreover, this level was defined in a very strict sense.

But, in a Church that wishes to be both missionary and concerned with her own reform, it was inevitable that in recent decades there should have been great activity in pastoral theology. It is considered less and less as a heteroclite ensemble of practices and prescriptions on the fringe of the principal body of doctrine and has become, progressively, a comprehensive vision of the Church in its project of perpetual edification. One can even think, as we have suggested elsewhere,<sup>1</sup> that, by a sort of return shock, pastoral theology is soon going to question the most profound bases of systematic theology. At the same time

<sup>1</sup> Fernand Dumont, *Pour la conversion de la pensée chrétienne*, 1964, pp. 205 ff.

and no doubt as in a converging thrust, one notices from different quarters the necessity of a veritable theological anthropology. We recall that the Word is referred both to God and to man. From that one must first disengage the biblical foundation; we are now applying ourselves to that task with dispatch. Inspiration must also be sought from the great themes of contemporary philosophical anthropology. But it is incontestable that the sciences of man, and particularly sociology, will have to play an important role. One might even question whether that which is commonly called religious sociology, conceived as a watertight speciality and as a domain colonized by the religious confessions, will not quickly become obsolete.

If pastoral theology and theological anthropology continue to develop along the lines indicated thus far, it is unlikely that they will limit themselves to adding new tracts to the corpus of theology. They will suggest new, comprehensive perspectives to all of theology, an as yet badly defined opening to the concrete historical situations of man. For example: an anthropology that would limit itself to the historical categories used or suggested by the Bible would be unfaithful to Scripture itself, where one sees the chosen people rendering its faith explicit by the commentary taken repeatedly from its empirical history. Besides, the end of the Christian age takes us ineluctably back to an analogous task. We have been for a long time enclosed in a kind of intemporal Christian culture where the events, the situations, the human condition itself were, so to say, defined beforehand. All the remainder: the gropings, the incertitudes, the hopes of concrete societies were considered the useless debris of history. The result was the well known combination of theologies frozen in centuries-old systems, authority anxious to define everything, dull, abstract spiritualities of escape.

A pastoral theology and a theological anthropology are not, then, simply a new scientific enterprise: they demand a conversion of thought to the practice of the historical experience of the Christian. It is the transmutation of this experience into an explication of the eternal word of God. Consequently, the dialogue of theology and sociology modifies itself radically. It is no

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longer simply a question of two disciplines directly confronted by problems that primarily derive from a theory of knowledge, no longer a question of theology seeking bits of abstract information and "results" from sociology, but of seeking a certain experience in the reading of the varied aspects of the historical experience of man.

If theology has become in large part an explicitation of the Christian praxis, sociology, in its turn, has lost the "disinterested" character that marked it until recently. A suggestive parallel might be made between the systematic theologian, isolated from the historical difficulties of the faith, and the positivistic sociologist of the Durkheim type, the aloof academic, who thinks that he considers "social facts as things." In a way, sociology has since then followed a path similar to that which has been taken by contemporary theology. It no longer dominates its object from such an exalted position. Like its related disciplines, sociology has become one of the mechanisms essential to the functioning of the new society. It finds itself involved in all the dominant powers' tentatives of consolidation and with all the forces of transformation, in the tactics of enterprises, the counsels of parties and factions, in the politics of development and planning.

In short, it is as parties occupied by two forms of praxis that theology and sociology must now engage in a new dialogue, less as two scientific intentions jealously fixed in their methodological presuppositions than as groping expressions of an unknown age of religious man and, simply, of man himself. I am not trying to insinuate that the properly epistemological problems of the mutual confronting of these two disciplines will vanish in this way. But these traditional terms will be profoundly reshaped: they will appear in any case in a second stage of the dialogue. The primary and essential stage consists first of all in placing the two disciplines face to face. Each in its own way is an expression of the historical praxis of man, while, at the same time, each is engaged in his future.

Seen from this point of view, sociology and theology are faced with astonishingly symmetrical problems at the present moment.

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I would like, briefly, to speak of this so that, together, we may catch a glimpse of the promises of a rich dialogue in the future.

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Four great themes seem to dominate the preoccupations of contemporary sociology: organization, the public-private duality, ideology, and development. Not only are these the areas in which most of the empirical investigations of the moment find their place, but they are also the main stimulus of the new orientations in general theory. These themes most clearly indicate the liaison between sociology and the decisive transformations of our societies. We shall draw a parallel between them and the related inquiries of Christian thought.

Everyone realizes that the phenomenon of organization in social life is gradually becoming predominant. Its sources are rather remote: the concentration of enterprises and the rationalization of work. But organization now extends itself to larger sectors. The social techniques are now taking over the methods of material techniques, entering the wider field of human relations. The prodigious development of public and private planning eliminates spontaneity from behavior to the profit of minutely calculated criteria of integration. In fact, the phenomenon admits of two very different aspects. On the one hand, social life becomes much more rational. This rationality refers to the powers capable of imposing the norms of rational activity: just think of the relationship between the research department and the worker in the modern factory. If the person is no longer globally subjected to authority as in ancient power structures, his behaviour is infinitely more controlled. The problem of the legitimacy of power is posed in a new context. On the other hand, this concentration of decision-making engenders a greater complexity of mechanisms, new forms of control and participation, the restrictions of the networks that constitute bureaucracy.

Fundamentally, this proliferation of organization rests on an essential relationship, namely, that some roles and modes of behavior can be assembled according to certain criteria which

do not involve the totality of the person nor his basic values; thus the factory worker is chosen according to aptitudes and for well defined tasks: as for the remainder of his personality, it is presumed to be understood that it will express itself in other sectors of life. This is only a particularly striking example. The postulate under discussion is completely dominating social life: the proportion of our behaviour and relationships with others in which it is rules and statutes rather than persons that enter into contact grows unceasingly. Hence the public-private duality typical of our civilization. Men are more and more clearly aware that a considerable number of their actions are determined from without and that their basic self is kept to the background. Moreover, as if to compensate, they seek different circles and different relationships with others where intimacy will be privileged. In fact, a whole series of empirical studies has shown that the urban anonymity, of which so much has been said, finds its complement in a deepening of subjectivity and affectivity in certain areas of existence. There is a considerable problem here: if values and human ends are cultivated within narrow confines where intensity is tied to gratuitousness, will the major orientations of the collectivity be abandoned to anonymous powers?

Thus the old problem of ideologies is restated in a new light. Especially during the last hundred years, it has been agreed to consider the "productions of the mind" to be profoundly marked by the social situations of those who formulated them. This is but one of the components of that "era of suspicion" in which Nietzsche and Freud, along with Marx, played their part: man distrusts justifications which hide one's thoughts, especially those aimed at absolutes. However, for several decades now, the problem has been taking on a new form. At first, from various quarters, there was talk of "the end of ideologies": discussions on the general meaning of societies were made obsolete by the greater and greater ascendancy of technology. Thus much was made of the fact that, in spite of opposed ideologies, the U.S.S.R. and the United States were evidently related on a very profound level, insofar as they are industrial societies. However, and

in another perspective, the extension of technology, planning especially, poses once more the problem of the determination of social finalities. We are better able to gauge the great options which present themselves to communities, options which have often been listed in recent years: economies of power, of leisure, of consumption, of creation, of solidarity, but they are only paradigms that say little about the content of a concrete future. Our societies are constrained to question themselves about their profound nature, about the great constants of their tradition and their destinies, about the Utopias that, without being able to formulate them, would be of help in defining the common values that planning demands.

It can be seen how these three themes converge towards the fourth as to their focus; this fourth theme is development. In fact, to speak of "development" is not only to recall obstacles to economic growth or even an ensemble of policies; but it is also, and more profoundly, to mark the necessity of a new vision of history which proceeds precisely from the phenomena that have just been mentioned. The predominance of organizations marks the taking over by technology of more and more numerous layers of the historical reality; after the traditions of the trade-guilds, it is now the traditions of the larger social life that are disintegrating. The dissociation of the public and private indicates a new perspective of conscience on the future of the community and, at the same time, the urgent need to develop new forms. The debates about ideologies raise the whole problem of the ends to seek, in face of an extraordinarily enlarged historical horizon. In short, we must weave a new historical fabric.

The Christian is in a similar situation with regard to the Church and to the historical forms of Christianity. This fact must be underlined while recapitulating, within this perspective, the four above-mentioned themes in current sociology and in the society that poses questions to it.

The sorrowful awareness that the Church principally gives the image of an organization is one of the essential traits of the present situation of Catholicism. It was not so long ago that Father Congar complained: "an ecclesiology of the Church as a

society by communion and not only as a society by constraint, by organization, by the distribution of individuals among their posts with rights, duties, formalities. Not only a juridical society, but a society that is made from within."<sup>2</sup> This remark not only underlines a grave lacuna in theology; more than this, it is inevitably a diagnosis of the Church itself. Here again, as in society, large sectors of ecclesial life have been monopolized by official structures in one way or another. The Council has changed many perspectives on this point, but who can deny that ecclesiastical authoritarianism is a very close neighbour of the inertia of the Christian people? In the same way, it must be understood that the priest-layman dialectic has scarcely made its first steps and that it is still groping to find concrete forms of participation of which, thus far, there has been only a glimpse.

What has been said above of the public-private duality can be applied to the Church. On the one hand, the faithful are attached to the Church by roles and relations that remain somewhat apart from more personal and religious experience. Even the liturgical reform, important and pleasing as it may be, has not succeeded in shattering this type of anonymous religion. On the other hand, the most varied forms of private religious practice are proliferating in every direction: spiritualities still fixed on individualistic preoccupations with salvation, the multiplication of marginal and informal sects where the Christian feels that he has rediscovered his faith as a spontaneous experience. It is perhaps somewhere between the two extremes that the present religious crisis is lived most intensely, in a duality, as yet difficult to resolve, between a religious policy and a Christian message which will find its expression in the Church only at the price of formal and endlessly disputed agreements.

This tension also restates the problem of Christian ideologies. That Christianity as such is not an ideology in the proper sense of the term is clear since, in many countries, the Church refuses to offer official directives for all the problems of society. But she remains no less involved in history. Different factions are agitating within her and appeal to her in the struggle. These

<sup>2</sup> In *Un concile pour notre temps*, 1961, p. 249. A similar remark is made in *Vraie et fausse réforme dans l'Eglise*, 1950, p. 7.

internal contradictions are undoubtedly necessary; but since they are no longer solved by decrees from the Holy Office, it will likely be necessary for the Church to elaborate that critique of ideologies that is demanded for society in general. But the question has still larger dimensions. A Church that no longer wishes to define itself simply as a juridical structure, which desires to be less authoritarian and nearer to the lived experience of its faithful must restate the problem of its historical ends. By right, the Church transcends the event and situates herself in a sacred history; of this there is no question. But she is also inserted in the whole historical process and she must define herself as to her intentions and her objectives. Otherwise, under pretext of disengagement, the juxtaposition of the most ethereal spirituality and the most concrete religious policy that is contested at the moment, would re-establish itself under new forms.

Thus, once more, all converges on a common focus, namely, the development of the Church. This concept of development is familiar to us in a Christian context; but we have used it until now at the level of doctrine. It will be necessary to transpose the concept to the whole ecclesial reality, creating, for this ensemble, criteria similar to those that have been specified for doctrine. The moment the authoritarian regulation of Christian society is questioned, the moment the problem of mediation between religious experience and official forms is restated, the moment internal tensions are welcomed as sources of vitality, a basically new rapport between Christianity and history must be defined. The problem is as decisive as the problem posed to humanity as it faces a new historical age, and it is as completely unknown. For the reform in which the Church of today has irremediably engaged itself does not simply follow the path of earlier reforms. An eminent theologian has underlined this fact: we are leaving "an era in the course of which renaissances and reforms, the good and the bad, were only episodes in a uniform historical process."<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> M.-D. Chenu, "Vie conciliaire de l'Eglise et sociologie de la foi," *Esprit*, December 1961, p. 687.

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Thus, as men and as Christians we are confronted by an altogether different history.

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Even if we have had to limit ourselves to a few brief notations, it seems to us that there is a suggestive parallel between the great problems of the human condition that contemporary sociology places before us and the difficulties of the Christian condition by which contemporary theology is confronted.

In itself, this parallel can constitute a useful warning in our task of criticism and reform of the Church. We speak willingly of a "reconversion of the Church to the world." I will not radically contest this formula, but it seems to me that it calls for considerable refinement. If it is true, as I have suggested, that the decisive problems in Christianity and in the world are parallel, we must proceed by a conjoint evaluation of the present state of both. There is reason for thinking that many of the lacunae that can be recognized in the Church are perhaps not specific to it; rather, they are symptoms of the fact that she belongs to this world. To be consoled by this would be an illusion, but we are reminded of the double responsibility of the restoration of Christianity and the restoration of the human condition.

Thus we glimpse, not a parallel, but a common task. Let us try, in a very concise manner, to set out its main lines. To do so, we must put a question in a most radical way: what is meant when we speak, as I have done, of the necessity of a new rapport with history which is implicit in the present transformations of social praxis and of Christian life?

Immediately and inevitably one thinks of the gradual liquidation of traditions now very old. This liquidation is accepted willingly, as inevitable if not as a blessing. The idea of tradition, more often than not, only evokes formal conventions without existential overtones. But the ancient traditions were much more than that: they formed a global condition of man whereby he was present to himself and to history. In fact, they structured the time of human experience. Tradition, in this sense, can

most briefly be defined as a syncretic integration of active moments in temporal sequence with an explicit meaning. This definition calls for some explanation.

In his work, the peasant of former times knew how to calculate, how to adjust means to ends: the manufacture and use of elementary tools presumed an incontestable ingenuity regarding the composition of materials and the equilibrium of forces. But side by side and mingled with this calculation were rites considered to be just as efficacious in themselves. Man in this tradition did not conceive of areas of activity in which the idea of a continuous linkage of ends and means could rest exclusively on abstract principles of causality. Traditional tools suggest operations, the strict logic of which was obvious, but the train of logic was short and quickly broken. More majestic linkages lay elsewhere, in the choice of archetypal stages rich in significance. Our modern mentality immediately sees a contradiction here, but it is mistaken. In tradition, causal linkages submitted to technical necessity were not seen on that very specific level at which our theories constitute the representation and the synthesis. They receive their cohesion and their meaning in an existential space where, at a blow, they were restored to the significant totality of human experience. This is why the peasant of former times did not separate in his work properly technical criteria from symbolic and even mythical signs. Such was also the case with the trades, which long survived in industry: these skills were based on technical operations that were often very subtle, but they were integrated with rhythms and customs that at once gave them unity and meaning. These concrete and non-continuous reference points left many gaps for rest, reverie, and contemplation of work; Marx happily qualified them as the "pores" of traditional work.

Tradition did not limit itself to situating technology within the limits of a significant temporality; it did the same for symbols. The man of tradition lived as we do, in an everyday world filled with signs, with those *correspondences* of which Baudelaire speaks. But unlike Baudelaire and unlike all of us, he did not capture these calls of the world merely by chance.

Tradition provided limits within which they could be read: of all this, the myths are the clearest example. But let us also remember the strict distribution of the four meanings of Scripture elaborated by patristic and mediaeval thought, and we can perceive its world view in this extract from the bull *Unam Sanctam* of Pope Boniface VIII (1302): "It is the law of Divinity that the lowest are to be led through the intermediate to the highest. Not therefore, according to the law of the universe, are all things kept in order equally and immediately; but the lowest through the intermediate and the inferior through the superior."

In fact, tradition did not even limit itself to bringing techniques and symbols together. This double operation quite naturally permitted technique and symbolism to be joined directly. As an illustration I like to cite this passage from Virgil: "The great Father, himself, has willed that the path of husbandry should not be smooth. He first made art awake the fields, sharpening men's wits by care. . . . Before Jove's day no ploughman turned the sod; even to mark a field or divide it by setting up boundaries, was unlawful." In short, work and, more generally, man's temporal activity, did not refer to his empirical conditions, to the invention of tools and technical processes, to the debatable history of property and social conflict. Tradition quickly fled to timeless models which could correspond to globally combined periods in daily existence.

Our modern conceptions of work, of symbols, of life, are quite different, as we well know. The calculation of ends and means, disseminated in the all-embracing temporality of traditions has been isolated and consolidated for itself, according to its own logic, in more and more extended sectors of the collective life. We have become infinitely attentive to the structure of the event, and this in two ways. On the one hand, in work, we seek to break down activity patterns into their most irreducible elements. That is what Taylor did, at the beginning of the century, when he wished to know the necessary articulations of the manual laborer's movements; then he reassembled them, eliminating all that was unnecessary to the logical totality of the

action. This process is the basis of what is called the "rationalization of work." The "pores" of traditional work have been eliminated as completely as possible. This conception has now been applied well beyond the industrial field, reaching its highest point in those organizations which, as we have said, are predominant in social life. Henceforth, logic is opposed to the lived—rational behaviour, to the total personality.

In other respects, symbols refuse to remain within accepted frames of reference. A work of art or of literature no longer justifies itself except as a unique meteorite, as debris of that "great game" of which Valéry spoke and for which we no longer consider ourselves capable of comprehensive rules. Opposed to work, leisure presents a similar face: we cannot define it except by its opposite, that is, as a compensation for labor, as an obscure, meaningful liberation with regard to another segment of life which is meaningless.

Thus, little by little a radical reversal is coming about. For the global structures in which traditions reconciled the exercise of techniques and the reading of symbols in the total experience of human temporality, we have substituted a duality: on the one hand, time, organized according to strict logic, that of work in particular; on the other hand, the inorganic time of the dream, where the meaning of existence is completely absent, as in leisure.

Consequently, the final question is inevitable: how far can this reversal of perspective go, this gradual erosion of tradition? Let us be even more radical: is a complete elimination of tradition conceivable? We shall begin with this hypothesis. It would presume that man lives in two temporal spheres, absolutely detached one from the other. On the one hand, time, marvelously organized according to sequences rigorously defined by logic and calculation: actions exactly arranged in plans, social roles seen uniquely in terms of their functional complementarity. These sequences would certainly conserve an element of chance, but it would be limited to possible combinations of variables. Here we would find the firmest foundation of existence. Elsewhere, the conscience of each could pursue the desperate

search of the meaning of life, but in a temporality without form and without real history, in a perpetual reverie juxtaposed to function. Thus, we would then be, literally, in a post-historic world, since history develops in the anonymity of meaning.

But it would be the death of man. And it would also be the death of Christianity. I do not see where the idea of a history of salvation could attach itself: does not this history assume that something is accomplished in the destiny of humanity, that the collective becoming conceals a meaning that Christ came to assume in depth, and of which the Church is the witness throughout history? What would remain of our sacraments, which are not primarily the commentary of diffuse symbols, but the union of the mystery of God and the fundamental historical situations of man? To what commitments could the faith push one, if the world were no longer "a work to do," calling for the presence of the Christian?

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This is—let it be repeated—only a hypothesis. Let us not give in to the inane attraction of the apocalypse and of death, which is one of the temptations of our civilization. But the hypothesis is a legitimate horizon for our reflections of the moment, when we assess a gradual disappearance of traditions, and when the irresistible rationalization of our collective life is confidently announced to us constantly and from every side.

It is before this horizon that our combat as men and as Christians can, it seems to me, take on its comprehensive meaning. On the one hand and on the other, we shall have to untangle in depth the authentic traditions and those which, though abusing the appearance of authenticity, are but precarious mechanisms of defense of our parties, our democracies, our nations, our hemisphere, our churches. In contrast to our social and political combats, so dispersed as they may be at the level of events, we must bring about another, wider debate, a debate which is already happily begun, on the planning, the Utopias and the great historical traditions. Also, among Christians, beyond our daily criticism of anonymous ecclesiastical structures

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and the personal commitments to which we try to give form, we must proceed to a broad examination of our traditions. Thus, in both cases there is a demand for a profound redefinition of our collective fidelities in an age in which those fidelities are questioned by a new face of history.

Sometimes I even think that the present obligation of Christianity, in what concerns its traditions, can be seen as a kind of prototype of the obligation that is presented to the whole of mankind. At moments of great uncertainty, I for my part search for lessons in the remote sources of our religious heritage, in the Old Testament. The constitution of the chosen people presumed a prodigious revision of primitive traditions and their integration in the paradigm of an historical destiny; it demanded the choice of decisive events and a recasting of dispersed customs; it also allowed a rereading of the legacies from the past at different stages of Israel's history. Here we find the analogy and the promise—the type, as St. Paul and the Fathers liked to say—of the terrible task confided to us at this hour of the history of man and of the Church.

## 17.

# THEOLOGY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND THE RENEWAL OF THE CHURCH

FRANZ CARDINAL KÖENIG

## 1.

THE Vatican Council's *Decree on the Instruments of Social Communication* emphasizes above all the right use of these means and the moral responsibility of those who work on them or who receive their products. The decree underlines the responsibility of the laity in this sector, and stresses the obligation of public authority in this regard to protect and further the common good.

The following remarks are intended as a brief introduction to the new field of scientific research concerned with social communication. They are meant as evidence of the interest of the Catholic Church in this research, and as a suggestion of some pastoral-theological ways in which the Church can make use of it.

May I begin by asking your indulgence for presenting this survey simply in outline form. I hope that our theologians are awake to these new possibilities of the era after the Council, and that they will not fail to give due attention to research concerning means of communication.

The scientific study of communications is involved in a long process of development, but it is already clear today that the

area of research material stretches from philosophical thought to the practical realities of daily life and that it is concerned with the social as well as with the private spheres. The Gospel which we are charged to preach does not change, but the methods of preaching it must be adapted to the demands of the age and of science. Thus we respond to the words of holy scripture (Mt. 13, 52): "Every teacher initiated in the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven is like the head of a household who produces from his store new things and old."\*

### *Communications*

The term "communication" is seen more and more often in all sorts of modern publications. One might be tempted to evaluate this fact as a passing fashion, were not a second fact even more remarkable, namely, the rapid increase of the products of communication in modern civilisation. For example, in the field of psychology alone, about 14,000 scientific publications appear every year. The *Decimal Catalogue* for library documentation needs three full volumes simply to list the titles of publications in the various scientific disciplines. A UNESCO report from the year 1961 lists 7,660 daily newspapers, with a total circulation of 288 million. This figure is 31 per cent higher than that of 1948. Each year more than 100,000 books are published, totalling many million copies. About 2500 films are produced annually. There are 600 radio stations and 1000 television stations, with a total of 520 million viewers.

The climate of our modern civilisation is, so to speak, highly communicative and has evoked modern communications research, about which a few remarks may be useful.

Modern communications research is relatively young. It is true that the language-sciences, developed today in philology and linguistics, were known by the grammaticus even in antiquity, and that the philosophy and logic of language have long

\* Citations from the New Testament are from the Kleist-Lilly translation.

existed. Rhetoric too, another product of antiquity, can be regarded as a precursor of the modern studies. Nevertheless, it was only a relatively short time ago, within the last thirty years, that the sociologists and psychologists began to take an empirical interest in the process of communication especially, although not exclusively, in the realm of mass communications. Group dynamics, or research into the structure and activity of small groups, which developed out of the school of Lewin, has contributed largely to our knowledge of communication, and so has, in a somewhat different field, the research in organisational psychology.

Mass communications, small group research, and organisational psychology are thus the main fields of socio-psychological communications research. The recent development has led to very interesting research programs, carried out for example at the Universities of Yale and Stanford, on various topics such as the study of attitude change, the use of mass media for educational purposes, and cross-cultural phenomena. There are university programs for the doctorate in mass communications research and public affairs communication, so that there will soon be an increasing number of academically trained persons in the field of communications research and practice. Socio-psychological communications research is but one area in a much vaster field. In 1948 Claude E. Shannon succeeded in formulating the so-called Information Theory, which provides a central, universal structure and organisation in the field of electrical communication. Even biologists have taken advantage of communications research and carried out interesting studies in the field of communication among animals.

All this has contributed to the increasing importance of what in Europe are called the formal sciences, namely, formal logic, pure mathematics, statistics, cybernetics. These developments have been closely followed up by the philosophy of science, a field of scholarly investigation which is growing most rapidly in the Anglo-Saxon world but which is nevertheless indebted to the Viennese school of thinking, especially in the thirties of our century.

The great significance of these sciences may be shown in one example. Perhaps the most famous disputed question of theoretical physics, that debated between Einstein on one side and Bohr, Born, and Heisenberg on the other, was settled through the answer which the meta-theory of complementarity offered to the important question of the nature of radiant energy. The term "meta-theory" indicates that here, for the first time, a form of relationship binding the theoretical systems of various separate scientific disciplines had been sought and found, a form of relationships that may be called inter-disciplinary communication.

It is true that the thought of a unified, all-embracing science remains at present more of a dream than a reality; nevertheless, the research concerning the so-called theoretical language represents a great step in this direction. Thinkers such as Braithwaite, Carnap, Ayer, Hempel, Feigl, and Goodman have all contributed to the attempts to express the scientific language of interdisciplinary communication in a language of artificial logical signs, the theoretical language. This artificial logic-mathematical language is used at present in increasing measure not only by the natural sciences but also by economics, sociology, political science, and psychology. In this way, not only language barriers and geographical distances can be surmounted, but also the obstacles which the special methods of the various sciences place in the way of inter-scientific communication.

These are startling and fascinating developments, of which our traditional theology is a sometimes bewildered witness, as for example Father Ivo Thomas O.P. has pointed out in a scholarly paper on "Logic and Theology" (*Dominican Studies* 1948, vol. I, no. 4, 291-312). The renewal of the Church, however, will be deeply affected by these new ways of scientific and popular communication, inasmuch as it interprets itself in cooperation with all these creative enterprises within the family of man. There are many problems of communication still unsolved, not only in scientific areas but also, and even more painfully, in the field of human understanding. Both fields are interrelated. It is a noble and most challenging task for our

Church to offer its services to mankind as a whole. That is why I shall attempt to sketch the various functions of the Church in communicating a message—the good news—and in receiving, if I may put it this way, numerous feed-backs. There is a mutual exchange between the Church and human society, and our knowledge about the nature of this exchange is of great importance for the renewal of the Church. As a first approach, I should like to direct your attention to a passage in the *Confessions* of St. Augustine, which Ludwig Wittgenstein used in his late period as a starting-point for his *Philosophical Investigations*.

In the first book of the *Confessions*, Augustine describes his childhood and recalls the time when he was learning to talk. The text is as follows:

When they named anything, and as they spoke turned towards it, I saw and remembered that they called what they would point out by the name they uttered. And that they meant this thing, and no other, was plain from the motion of their body, the natural language, as it were, of all nations expressed by the countenance, glances of the eye, gestures of the limbs, and tones of the voice, indicating the affections of the mind as it pursues, possesses, rejects, or shuns. And thus by constantly hearing words, as they occurred in various sentences, I collected gradually for what they stood; and having broken in my mouth to these signs, I thereby gave utterance to my will. Thus I exchanged with those about me these current signs of our wills. (*Conf.* 1, 8, 13.)

In his treatises *De Magistro* and *De Doctrina Christiana*, Augustine expounded an original philosophy of language in a line of reasoning which is still serviceable today. The passage which has been cited from the *Confessions* contains the essence of his views. In modern terms, communication according to Augustine may be described as a stimulus-response process in which three elements or phases are related to each other: the subjects or egos, the signs, and the objects or things.

When describing his learning process as a sort of information-seeking, Augustine refers to other egos (*majores homines*) on

the one side, and to the *signs*, by which the *things* are indicated, on the other side. The various stimuli come not only from other persons such as his parents; shortly before the text already quoted, Augustine refers to an impulse of communication that comes from within himself: "It was not that my elders taught me words (as, soon after, other learning) in any set method; but I, longing by cries and broken accents and various motions of my limbs to express my thoughts" (*Conf.* 1, 8, 13). He himself, although he is not yet able to speak, desires to communicate his wishes to those around him, and his ego makes use of such pre-linguistic signs as inarticulate sounds and more or less uncontrolled bodily movements.

There are other egos who communicate with him in a new way: they not only make use of gestures, which are the natural signs of all people; they also use traditional linguistic signs, that is, words. To these stimuli Augustine responds by learning, by preserving these sounds in his memory. Now he is able to articulate his desires and emotions in utterances that are understandable to his environment; he has entered society in communicating with other egos by the signs of human language.

Thus we see that the network of human communication cannot come into being without signs.

In the few sentences which have been quoted, Augustine has formulated very modern insights. He points towards the close connection between language and society which has been made clear in recent times by sociologists and linguists. He draws our attention to the significance of learning, which at present represents a broad area of socio-psychological research, and he stresses the importance of language and meaning for human beings, a concern which is being increasingly dealt with by contemporary philosophy.

The basic distinction in Augustine's philosophy of language is that between *signa naturalia*, or natural signs, and *signa data*, or conventional signs. Augustine uses the classical example of smoke as a natural sign which, even from far away, signalizes fire. Among other conventional signs, words are mentioned. This treatment of signs leads us into a wide area of decisive

importance in understanding communication, namely, the area of symbols in the broadest sense of the term. This includes not merely linguistic symbols, such as are investigated by logic, philosophy of science, philology, linguistics, and philosophy of language, but also those very meaningful symbols which are called images and which are investigated by depth psychology, cultural anthropology, and the history of religions. Publicity campaigns have meanwhile learned to make effective use of images. Nor may we forget those symbols which may be called aesthetic, by means of which the fine arts and music are formed.

Thus far we have been concerned chiefly with the elements of symbolic interaction, such as words, sounds, gestures, and images. But human communication consists of more than elements alone, because these elements are woven together into a much more complex unity, which according to a famous scientific school may be called "Gestalt." Furthermore, symbolic interpersonal action with its many Gestalts is not to be thought of as static. Its nature is to be taken as self-realization in a process-like way.

If we may return again to Augustine, we shall note that this Father of the Church in his time knew a lot about what is called in our modern times communication theory, although his concern, naturally, was mostly with religious communication. In his explanations of the interpretation of scripture, he dealt at length with the problem of meaning, not only in regard to the elements of communication, but also in regard to larger units such as whole contexts. By his distinction between *sensus proprius* and *sensus figuratus*—that is, proper or literal meaning and figurative meaning—he not only established an intricate technique for religious communication according to the traditions of his time; he also furnished a high-rated theory in this area, to which, in our times of demythologization, theologians could refer with remarkable gain.

Furthermore, Augustine stressed the behavioral context of religious communication in his *Confessions* in referring to his personal engagement in public worship (*Conf. 9, 6, 14*).

In reference to his own baptism, Augustine noted the follow-

ing: "How did I weep, in Thy Hymns and Canticles, touched to the quick by the voices of Thy sweet-attuned Church! The voices flowed into mine ears, and the Truth distilled into my heart, whence the affections of my devotion overflowed, and tears ran down, and happy was I therein" (*Conf.* 9, 6, 14).

In this context, communication is grasped as a unit of manifold elements, such as sounds, words, music, and ritual. Nor does Augustine hesitate to speak of "truth" in this situation where, in our times, one would prefer to speak of "feeling." Later we shall come back to this point, which is of great significance in the problem of religious communication today.

Allow me to point out one last aspect, which appears especially significant in relation to the renewal of the Church, namely, that of creativity. Augustine did not write mere theoretical treatises about the relationships in human communication which we have indicated. He was one of those who understand the art of communication, the so-called *modus enuntiationis*, the mode of presentation, the know-how. He was not only a brilliant speaker, master of the art of rhetoric of his time. He was more than that. He himself helped form the language of his time in that he Christianized it. To evaluate this creative transformation justly, one must compare the style of his early papers with that of the later publications, written after his intensive study of the Bible. We cannot point out here in detail the impregnation of Augustine's style by the Bible. But we can by Augustine's authority formulate two points in a possible program for ecclesial communication: first, the importance of *artistry* in communication, and, second, the necessity of high *theoretical standards* in dealing with problems of communication. We should now like to develop these two points in some detail.

## 2.

Let us consider first what we want to call the factor of artistry in communication, which is closely correlated with the principle of creativity. The Church's communication, in every area of its

realisation, starts with a program that was formulated by St. Paul "Preach the word, be urgent in season, out of season; convince, rebuke, exhort people with perfect patience and teaching" (2 Tim. 4, 2).

The Apostle here wants to stress the necessity of promulgating the "good news" at all times and by all means. Yet this same Apostle gives us a precious hint about the factor of artistry when he expresses his desire (in 1 Tim. 3, 2) that a bishop be *didaktikon*, which may be translated "apt at teaching." This aptitude is not only a function of doctrinal ability, the knowledge of *what* to say, but something more, the ability *how* to say one's message.

We all know that there are good and less good preachers and catechists, and we very often pass judgment on them as such in our daily life in the Church, for example, when we ask who is going to give the sermon on a certain feastday or whom we should invite to give the retreat on one occasion or another. The standard according to which we make these judgments is quite evidently not identical with the standard used for the *missio canonica*, which attests to theological formation. The measure of aptitude is something of another dimension, and we may therefore with some justification speak of the *art of communication*.

It was Aristotle who distinguished among our ways of dealing with ourselves and our surroundings the *theoria* from the *praxis* and the *poiesis*. In the Church, *theoria* corresponds to dogmatic theology, *praxis* to moral theology, and *poiesis* to pastoral or practical theology. This *poietic* element of communication is of very high importance. It concerns itself not merely with poetry in the contemporary sense of the word, but in general with the whole realm of the modes of presentation, that is, with the art of presentation. The contents of a message may be true or false, they may be moral or immoral, but the message may also be "good" or "bad" in regard to the way it is presented. We have, therefore, a three-dimensional way of looking at the contents of a communication, and this is true also of ecclesial communication. These three dimensions represent the classical triad of the true, the good, and the beautiful.

That is why the theology of beauty in this regard is very useful, as has been stressed in some of the writings of Hans Urs von Balthasar.

Lately, a new light has been shed on the *poietic* element of communication by two brilliant scholars, namely Father Walter Ong, S.J. and Professor Marshall McLuhan. In pointing out the socio-cultural consequences of the Gutenberg revolution, namely the invention of print, these two authors have sharpened our understanding of what is going on in our days in regard to what is called the electronic revolution caused by the invention of the audio-visual media.

In the next year, boys and girls in the United States who will at that time be 18 years old will have spent a total of time before the television screen that equals two years of their lives.

This is only one example for the increasing importance of the electronic media and their influence on the environment of our everyday lives.

Furthermore, the invention of communications satellites will have its effects on mankind in the near future insofar as almost everybody on the globe will be able to participate instantaneously in what is going on day by day.

It is by considerations of this kind that deeper insights in what I have called the *poietic* or artistic element of communication are of great importance in our days.

I should like to conclude these remarks with a reference to Thomas Aquinas, who wrote the following sentences, drawn from the noble tradition of antiquity, on the subject of artistic value:

The good of anything subject to measure and rule consists in its being conformed to its rule; and so, the good in works of art is that they should follow the rule of art. But the bad in such things consists, consequently, in a lack of conformity to the proper rule or measure. (S. T. Ia IIae, q. 59, a. 1, c.)

A glance at Church history might suffice to confirm our suspicion that the aspect of artistry in religious communication

was somewhat neglected during the past hundred years. It may well be that the Church during this period was too preoccupied with other concerns. At any rate, those observers who claim to have remarked a certain lack of artistic creativity in the latest period of past Church history would not seem to be wholly wrong. Many church edifices were built at this time in mere imitation of past architectural styles, significant literary movements took place for the most part outside the Church, and ecclesiastical patronage in the realm of music tended to neglect the contemporary in protecting the past. Despite the many points of contact that should have joined them, Church and art developed in substantial separation from each other.

We all know that this had not always been so. I need only remind you of the marvelous fecundity which art and literature received from the Franciscan movement in the Middle Ages; or of the flourishing of religious choral music in the Church of the Reformation, encouraged especially by Martin Luther himself; or of the patronage of the arts by the Renaissance popes.

A beautiful example of initiative from within the Church in cooperation with our own contemporary art is offered by the personal dedication of the late Father Couturier, O.P., who, by the way, spent several years during World War II in Canada. Soon after the war and despite great difficulties, Couturier persuaded the most eminent French artists, regardless of their religious confession, to work together in building churches. These buildings—for example, the church in Assy—offer a stimulating example of the possibility of new ways of artistic creation in our day.

Let us now turn from these examples to the problems of artistry in the mass media. It can be said with truth that the development of these means produces the so-called multiplicator effect, not just in regard to the multitude of the audience but also in another respect: each one of the mass media, as they exist today, requires the mastery of a specific artistic technique. There are several distinct “artistries,” if I may put it this way, for the various ways of communicating, in the press, by film, by radio, and by television. Thus the classical arts have been

multiplied in a very characteristic way, which is specific for our modern times. To this phenomenon we should like to refer as to the "media-fit presentation."

In the renewal of the Church it is surely of great importance to pay more attention to this requirement than we have previously done. For example, the possibilities of using the traditional art of preaching for radio and television without making any adaptations are extremely limited. Anyone who speaks on radio or television has to be aware that he is reaching his audience in a private atmosphere, where other attitudes condition the reception than those, for example, to be found in a public assembly. The transmissions of religious services, too, certainly have to be worked out in a thorough and competent way by mass-media specialists, if they are not to be diminished into mere second-hand issues of first-hand events.

It is obvious that not every priest can be expected to be an expert in mass communications. Preachers in this area have to be very carefully sought out and specially trained. And even were this not so, we would have in any case a duty to encourage the specialists working in the mass-media fields to make their talents bear fruit in religious programs more than they have done up to now. Imagine what possibilities, as yet scarcely tapped, radio and television might offer to communicate the "good news" in a perhaps unconventional but fruitful way. As long as modern ecclesiastical rhetoric for the mass media remains to be written, theologians will undoubtedly gain by entering into a vivid dialogue with those whose main business lies in the area of mass communications, especially with the artists in this field, and by refraining from a censorious attitude, which could be fatal to all "enterprises of great pith and moment" (*Hamlet*, III. 1).

The principle of media-fit presentation is closely related to the principle of creativity. Every real artist reminds us of God's creativity, and we should acknowledge this relation especially from a Catholic standpoint. I do not want to enter into the theological consequences of this statement just now, although it would be very tempting; however, I do want to hint at one

consequence that follows immediately from it, namely, a general open-mindedness towards all manifestations of real creativity in our days.

The principle of open-mindedness leads us to another area of mass communications, which of course has its special laws of presentation: the press. I cannot go into details, but one aspect of media-fit presentation regarding the press should not be omitted. The art of journalism, as one of the new liberal arts of our time, receives its specification, among other abilities, from the skill in furnishing information.

Now the willingness of any person or organisation to give away information might be called *transparency*. By the press, transparency is of course highly esteemed. Everybody who has to deal with the press, therefore, has to ask himself what degree of transparency he wants to permit himself. Non-transparent persons or organisations are as a consequence widely excluded from the press. The cases of consequent and complete non-transparency are of course rare. However, even partial non-transparency may constitute a grave obstacle to the public relations of persons or organisations. Naturally, there can be—for example in diplomacy—weighty reasons for partial non-transparency.

There may be times, also for the Church, when it is necessary to refuse information. Nevertheless, we are faced with the question: In what regards and to what extent should the Church be non-transparent? Or we might put it this way: Would not increased transparency help the Church in its public relations? There are two areas in which this does seem to be the case: in allowing criticism of ecclesiastical phenomena, and in decision making. Some time ago I myself made the remark that criticism of the fallible and questionable aspects of the Church would seem to be a good thing today. It is true that objective criticism can be painful, especially if it goes into detail; but in the long run, the Church will win sympathy if it accepts criticism, because it will thus have accepted one of the rules of democratic process.

A very important point for the transparency of the Church

in the field of public relations is that of decision-making. As a matter of fact, important decisions in the Church are made by the clergy. Theology and the official doctrine of the Church instruct us concerning the essential nature of the Catholic hierarchy; but in the very important problem of deriving a detailed definition of competence, this instruction must of its very nature leave many questions open. It is quite reasonable to think that the laymen in the Church may be more competent in a good number of fields than the clergy; and if this is true, then the consequences are important for decision-making in the Church. That, however, is just one aspect of the problem.

Let us take an example. In some Catholic suborganisation a secretary is wanted. Is it conceivable that the process of appointment to this job should be carried out in a democratic, transparent way? If yes, the man who gets the job will constantly be open to public criticism; consequently, he will not be a mere bureaucrat, but a functionary who is under constant control in performing his duties.

No doubt it will often be necessary for decisions in the Church to be made by a limited group of experts. The fundamental questions retain their urgency nonetheless: In principle, have the majority of the members of our Church a right to take part in the preparation of decisions, or have they not? And secondly, is there any solidly established means of obtaining the so-called feedback from the public in regard to decisions which have already been made? Many ecclesiastical decisions seem to be one-way communications, inasmuch as they are made in a non-transparent way and have to be carried out without the possibility of discussion. It may be true that this is unavoidable in some questions of faith and morals. But at least in questions of practical organisation, an increase of transparency could lead the press to have a more favorable attitude towards the Church and could also increase the flow of communication within the Church. In this point we see very clearly the narrow connection between the efforts to renew the Church and the public relations of the Church. We might even state a sort of prognostic law: the more the flow of communication within the

Church is increased, the more intercommunication between the Church and society as a whole will be increased.

In these last remarks we may seem to have wandered away from the theme of artistry in communication. In truth, however, we were trying to indicate something closely related to this theme, something that might be called the *communicative climate* within the Church. For only in such a favorable climate can the communicative arts develop unhindered within the Church, and only then can the cooperation with the mass media independent of the Church be substantially improved.

### 3.

Let us now turn our attention to a rather more difficult field, one which is of great importance for religious communication: the theoretical question of the nature of religious communication itself. It is naturally impossible to discuss here, even in a summary way, the question of the relation between faith and knowledge, between theology and science. We shall also have to omit any excursion into the history of theological and scientific movements. I should like to limit myself instead to calling your attention to a scientific controversy which has been going on for about 30 years, especially in the Anglo-Saxon lands, and which has been carried out with great fairness. This controversy merits the interest of everyone concerned in a theoretical or practical way with religious communication. Its background is the recent development of the empiricist critique of theology. This assumed its most striking and aggressive form in the work of the so-called logical positivists and was first formulated explicitly in England by Prof. A. J. Ayer in his famous little book, *Language, Truth, and Logic*, which appeared in 1936. At the present stage of the discussion, the empiricist attack seems to have ceased largely, perhaps altogether, to be an attack; some of its protagonists are sometimes called linguistic analysts or philosophical analysts and are greatly stimulated by the influence of the later Wittgenstein.

The part of the Vienna Circle in this serious concern with theological questions is an important one, though it cannot be discussed here. I want only to draw a sketchy outline indicating this development, which of course is only a part of contemporary philosophy of religion, though, as it seems, a very important one.

Professor Ayer himself started the discussion by the statement that all ethical, metaphysical, and theological utterances should be dismissed as meaningless and nonsensical, because they claim to make factual assertions about entities which are not objects of sense experience. The subsequent development of the debate is well illustrated by a discussion which took place at Oxford in 1950 and 1951 in a periodical, of which the more important contributions were reprinted in 1955 in the volume, *New Essays in Philosophical Theology*, edited by Antony Flew and Alastair MacIntyre. Meanwhile, shortly after the war a small group of philosophers and theologians had begun to meet regularly in Oxford, calling themselves "The Metaphysicals." Their discussions tended to center upon the nature and justification of Christian belief. Basil Mitchell edited some papers of this group in a book, *Faith and Logic*, which was published in 1957. These two books represent what has been called the left and the right wing of the movement, which has extended by now to the American continent. In 1960, the New York University Institute of Philosophy held a stimulating symposium, the papers of which were published in 1961 by Sidney Hook under the title, *Religious Experience and Truth*.

The climate of this symposium of philosophers and theologians, who came from different schools and confessions, is described as keen but amicable. It may be useful to quote some sentences from Hook's preface to the above-named volume in order to outline the situation:

It was Wittgenstein who, in a sense, released the theologians from the ban which his earlier work had helped to pronounce on them. Instead of asking, as a condition of meaningfulness of a word or

statement, whether it is verifiable, Wittgenstein suggested that the meaning of an expression is to be found in its *use* . . . Of one thing theologians were certain. They had been using words all their lives and distinguishing between their proper and improper uses in theological contexts. They need now have no fear of linguistic analysis. On the contrary, it was a method which could be employed both to clarify theological usage and to preserve its autonomy against "rude" requests from scientists and naturalists . . . (1. c. XIII).

Meanwhile, there has developed an increasing interest among Anglo-Saxon philosophers for the proofs for God's existence, stimulated partly by Norman Malcolm's article on "Anselm's Ontological Arguments" (*The Philosophical Review*, January 1960, 41 ff.).

It is thus the problem of the meaning of theological utterances with which many modern philosophers are preoccupied. Silently or expressly, they limit their concern almost exclusively to Christian theology, as do the majority of the modern philosophers of religion. The contribution of contemporary philosophy to the problem of religious communication is therefore limited, insofar as it is for the most part concerned only with the Christian religion and even within this area concentrates on theological discourse, which is in fact only a part of religious discourse—which includes, for example, the broad realm of liturgical texts.

As yet I have scarcely mentioned the significance of modern logic for a theory of religious communication. The fact is that both European and Indian theological literature contain a rich fund of logical treatises. This tradition, however, which was so intensively cultivated for example in scholasticism, seems to have been interrupted in a certain sense during the last centuries, so that the development of modern logic, which is also called formal logic, and which is usually said to have begun in 1847 with the appearance of De Morgan's *Formal Logic*, has taken place in practically total separation from theology.

In his Deems lectures of 1963, published in 1965 under the title, *The Logic of Religion*, Father Bochenski, O.P., has tried

to find a way to break this spell. In his enterprise he is aware of working in a relatively unexplored field.

We might add that this field, so unexplored as it may still be, is extremely important, and that research in this direction, in view of the development of modern science, appears to be highly significant for the renewal of the Church.

In outlining some of the major problems of religious communication, I shall confine myself to the question of *communicativeness of religious discourse*. Allow me to take as my starting point a citation from the *Confessions* of Augustine which I quoted in the first part of this conference: in speaking of the effect of religious music, Augustine wrote, "*Veritas eliquabatur in cor meum.*" Truth distilled into my heart. It may be said that this statement will sound alien to most semantic analysts of our days; it is very often said today that every meaning is either theoretical or emotional; and by theoretical, propositional is meant. Thus all nonpropositional meanings, such as imperatives, are reduced to the status of purely emotional meanings; furthermore, such meanings as those carried by music are also declared to be purely emotional.

The reason for this bias is clear: most semanticians are exclusively interested in science. Science, however, is composed of propositions; consequently, it is sufficient to divide all meaning into propositional and "other." Here the question arises, whether it is justified to call all these "other" meanings emotional. In fact, if one looks at the real situation, there are many meanings that are not propositional and yet not emotive at all. Both Father Bochenski, in the book which I have cited, and the Reverend E. L. Mascall, a Professor at King's College in London, in his inspiring book, *Words and Images*, published in 1957, stress the poverty of most contemporary semantic analysis regarding religious discourse.

I do not want, however, to reproach modern semanticians with these statements; it is a challenge I want to offer to these scholars, who in so many fields have made valuable contributions to our knowledge. Very promising attempts are being

made today to use modern tools in order to clarify many problems regarding not only scientific but also evaluative and aesthetic knowledge. Our Church hopes urgently and confidently that the ongoing discussion about the nature of religious discourse will lead to stimulating developments.

There are (according to Bochenski) several *a priori* possibilities in establishing theories on religious discourse and the nature of its communication:

1. Religious discourse has no meaning at all. This may be called the "Nonsense Theory."

2. The meaning of religious discourse is purely emotional. This may be called the "Emotionalist Theory."

3. The meaning of religious discourse is objective, but not communicable. This may be called the "Non-Communicativist Theory."

4. The meaning of religious discourse is objective and communicable, but not propositional. This may be called the "Communicativist, Non-Propositional Theory."

5. The meaning of religious discourse is incomplete. This may be called the "Theory of Incomplete Meanings."

6. The meaning of religious discourse includes at least some propositions. This may be called the "Propositional Theory."

Of course a Catholic standpoint will tend to reject several of these theories from the beginning. However, I do not want to enter into this discussion here. My intention has been simply to indicate the present state of thought concerning the theory of religious communication, and to point out how important the methodological questions have become.

Perhaps we are standing at the threshold of the establishment of what may be called with Bochenski a meta-theological system: this field opens up ample possibilities for co-operation among philosophers, logicians, theologians, historians, sociologists, and psychologists. No one should be excluded from this cooperation because of his personal beliefs or disbeliefs, if only he is willing and qualified to fulfil the requirements of modern academic thinking.

## 4.

In this last section, I should like to make some remarks on what may be called the *strategy of communication*. Strategies may be defined operationally as rational constructs of hierarchically ordered preferences regarding social action.

Within the Church there are in fact a large number of strategies which have developed in different ways within the generally recognized goals of the Church. Thus for example the Catholics of North America have pursued a clearly-recognizable strategy, directed by their high estimation of their school system, not to be found in other Catholic countries.

What can modern communications research teach us about possible strategies? I begin with a law which has been established by mass-media research. According to this law, the recipients of communications are strongly inclined to read, view, or hear only such messages as represent attitudes with which they already sympathize, and they tend to avoid messages of another coloring. In this regard, the effectiveness of the mass-media would seem to be obstructed; they frequently can do no more than confirm already-existing convictions and attitudes.

Allow me an attempt to apply this law to religious communications. In religious populations, we may distinguish between what may be called the *intensity segment* and the *reduction segment*. This division is made according to religious behavior and may be measured along at least two dimensions. One of these dimensions may be called "associational" and is defined by the frequency of church attendance; the other may be called "communal" and is defined by the frequency of personal contacts among believers.

In our Church, too, there is doubtless a reduction segment, of different size in different countries. There are many indicators that the reduction segment in countries which have a Catholic or Protestant majority is greater than that in religiously pluralistic countries.

Within the reduction segment, church-involvement is distinctly lower than within the intensity segment; persons who do not engage in religious activities, or do so only in a reduced way, have of course attitudes towards the Church different from the attitudes of those who practice their religion intensely.

For this reason, the basis of a strategy of religious communication will have to be the fact that the receptivity of the reduction segment is hindered by an emotional screen which is not operative in the same way in the intensity segment.

In other words, the degree of permeability to religious contents varies between the intensity segment and the reduction segment. An example may serve to clarify this point. The Church press (dailies, weeklies, periodicals) usually reaches only the intensity segment, which in other terms represents the market for the Church press. Therefore, anyone who undertakes to publish a Catholic newspaper intended to break into the reduction segment will have to try to work out a new and different style of make-up in order to reach a broad public.

Religious communications must not only take into account the above-named different emotional screens and the different degrees of permeability. It must also reckon with the fact that different groups in our modern society react in a markedly distinctive way to communications. Even within the same religious confession, different socio-psychological attitudes may be discerned, for example in old and in young persons, or in members of the lower, middle, and upper classes. This is true not only of mass communications, but also of religious communications in schools, youth-groups, and sub-organisations. That is why we are obliged not only to be attentive to what I have already designated as media-fit presentation, but also to take into account the different socio-psychological conditions affecting the various groups of recipients. We might speak of this as "contest-fit presentation."

Obviously there are a whole series of further problems in religious communication which cannot be handled here. Nevertheless I should like at least to mention a few of them. Modern societies are rapidly changing; for communicators of religious

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messages arises, therefore, the problem of coping effectively with an environment that is in constant and rapid change. Another item is the competition that arises for our Church from the so-called popular arts, which indeed bear manifold mythic and archaic elements in modern packaging. Potently destructive for genuine religious communication might be a widespread attitude in modern societies which may be called consumption mentality, as it is directly opposed to a more contemplative mentality. Finally, the modern phenomenon of so-called secularization will certainly influence future strategies of religious communications.

## 18.

# THE CHRISTIAN ETHIC: A COMMUNITY ETHIC

ENDA MCDONAGH

## INTRODUCTION

### *The Problem of a Christian Ethic*

THE title of this paper makes at least one presupposition that might be challenged even by Christian thinkers: that there is such a thing as a *Christian* ethic or, at any rate, a distinctively Christian ethic. The justification for this presupposition will emerge to some extent, I hope, in my analysis of that ethic as a community ethic. It may help, however, to indicate at the very beginning why I consider that there is a Christian ethic and what this ethic is.

The Christian ethic prescribing a Christian way of life or mode of behavior arises from the central Christian reality, the God-man (and man-man) relationship established in the person, life, death, and resurrection (glorification) of Jesus Christ. God's giving of himself to mankind in revelation was at once a gift and a challenge or demand (*donum et mandatum*) because by it he initiated a relationship with mankind which demanded a response. This relationship and the response from man which it involves, embraces man's whole life and his every human

action. Because the relationship and response are fully achieved in Jesus Christ, in whom God gave himself completely to man and in whom man responded fully to God, and because any particular man can respond (or come to God) only by association with Jesus Christ as his model and power source, Jesus Christ forms the standard or norm of Christian living and the activity in which it must issue.

What is distinctively Christian in a Christian ethic is this uncovering of the basic structure of human life and activity as a response to the Father in Jesus Christ, who constitutes in himself the criterion of whether a particular life or activity is such a response (and therefore good for man in this order), or not (and therefore bad). And because every man, irrespective of his explicit awareness of this, is so addressed by God, response in Christ is his only way to completion, and Jesus Christ constitutes the one test or norm of morality (of goodness and badness) for the life and activity of every man, either explicitly or implicitly. It is not, therefore, because of the formulated moral teaching of Jesus in the Gospels or of the rest of the New Testament or of the historical and developing Christian community that we speak of a distinctively Christian ethic. Such formulations have their importance, and in some instances as in the statements on the primacy of charity, they would be considered as decisive advances in ethical formulation. But they are necessarily secondary to and derivative from the relationship between God and man definitively achieved in Jesus Christ—a reality internal to the human community as a whole, as well as to each member of it.

### *Different Approaches to the Christian Ethic*

This brief outline of what is specifically Christian in a Christian ethic, that it is the living expression in human activity of God's self-gift to man in Jesus Christ or the human response to that gift which is possible only in and through Christ, introduces one further preliminary point for discussion before tackling the

theme proper to this essay, the community character of the Christian ethic.

In outlining the basic structure of the Christian ethic as Christian, a number of different ideas or approaches were used. The Christian ethic is an ethic of revelation not primarily in its formulated content but in its character as the response demanded of man by God's self-revelation or self-gift to him. It is an ethic or mandatory way of life that arises from the relationship into which God has entered with man in revelation, and particularly in its climax, Jesus Christ. Given these general characteristics, it would be possible to describe this ethic in various ways, from various angles.

It could well be called an ethic of the kingdom or kingship (sovereignty) of God. The purpose and message of revelation was to establish this kingship in men's hearts, to make this kingdom a reality on earth as it was in heaven. On the basis of this primary formulation of the message by Jesus himself, the distinctively Christian aspect of his ethic could be developed to express and include all human activity as the instrument or vehicle of the growth of this kingship. Such an approach or model with its immediate New Testament background would have much to recommend it also in dealing with the ticklish problem of applying the Christian ethic to all men and activities irrespective of their formal religious adherence and in allowing the progressive, dynamic character of the Christian ethic to appear as it discusses the value of human activity in terms of its contribution to the gradual development of the reign of God in the cosmos, in the human community, and in the individual human being.

The kingship of God approach to the Christian ethic comes very close to the eschatological approach which would view human activity in its relation to the parousia. The tension between what is already achieved for God, mankind, and the cosmos in the glorified Christ, and what is to be the extension of this in its fullness to all men and the cosmos, provides the criterion for judging the goodness and badness of human activity. Whatever expresses the already achieved in Jesus Christ and

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develops towards the what is to come is a good action, whatever fails to do this is bad.

No less biblical than these and with more immediate links with secular approaches to ethics would be the development of the Christian ethic as an ethic of love or of freedom. And one could list several others such as truth or conversion (*metanoia*). The summary by Jesus of the whole law and the prophets in love of God and love of neighbor and the development of this by Paul and John incline many contemporary Christians to describe the ethic of Jesus solely in terms of love, especially as they feel that in this way the real meaning of Jesus can be made intelligible to people who are not Christian. The value of such an approach both theologically and apologetically is undeniable. It arises naturally out of any vision of the Christian ethic as deriving from the God-man relationship, a love relationship based on God's love of man asking for man's love in response. And it closely relates to the theme of this essay.

Presented as an ethic of freedom or liberation, the Christian ethic emphasizes the liberating or saving aspect of God's activity in revelation. It was by his love for man in Jesus Christ that he set man free from his self-imposed slavery to sin, to the law, and to death. The freedom which the glorified Christ enjoys is offered to all men and is slowly achieved by them in their personal history and activity through the power and guidance of the Spirit of freedom given to them. As a way of liberation, which is also a way of integration, the Christian life and ethic could appear relevant and accessible to men of our time.

The approaches or models described here do not exhaust all the possibilities. The purpose of describing them was to stress an important factor sometimes overlooked in present-day discussion of the renewal of moral theology or of the Christian ethic. In the light of the riches of revelation or God's word to man and of the complexity of man in his world today, no one approach to the Christian ethic can do complete justice to the God-man relationship and the way of life it involves. At the present stage, for the foreseeable future, and perhaps always we will need different approaches or models which describe and

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illuminate this relationship, life, and activity from various angles. Such approaches will not be completely distinct but will overlap and complement each other. Applied to the Christian life as a whole or to particular areas or situations in it, they will by their overlapping and complementing give a better chance of understanding the general or particular demands of this life. For one problem one approach may be more helpful than another, but for deeper understanding of the Christian ethic the plurality of models offers great advantages.

### 1. THE CHRISTIAN ETHIC AS GIVEN TO MAN IN COMMUNITY

The model or approach I have chosen to develop in this essay, then, I do not regard as the only model or as necessarily the best one. Indeed, such comparisons are not very helpful. That the community approach is well founded theologically and particularly relevant today this essay will seek to demonstrate. The initial choice of the theme was certainly influenced by the preoccupation with the notion of community noticeable in theological and secular thinking today. It would be possible to describe the achievement of Vatican II as a development from thinking of the Church primarily as an organization, a juridically structured group, to thinking of it as a community, a people united above all by bonds of love in Christ. Such a development is more or less perceptible in the key documents of the Council, for instance the *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, where the first chapter deals with the mystery of the Church, its role as the sign of God's presence to man and of the unity of all mankind. This sign is primarily a people, God's people or community who became such a community by God's calling them and their response to him by faith or recognition and trust in him leading to loving union with him and with one another (ch. 2). Admittedly, this people has a particular structure with a special ministry (ch. 3), but a ministry that exists to serve the unity of the people in truth and in love. And the

people, including the lay people, enjoy a basic equality in dignity and fulfil in their different ways the role of mediating God's presence and call to all men and of showing forth the unity or community of all men (ch. 4). So far from being the impersonal subjects in an organization hierarchically organized, rationally ordered, and juridically directed, the Church appears in this Constitution as a people bound together in Christ by bonds deeper and more personal.

The free commitment and shared responsibility in love and service to God and neighbor of all members of the Church which the Constitution underlines is confirmed and developed in other documents. The *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* and the reforms consequent on it dwell on the community dimension of the Church and its liturgical worship. In the liturgy, particularly in the Eucharist, the community is most properly itself. It realizes its true character as God's people through communion with its head, Jesus Christ, in his self-giving to the Father. For this the bishop or one of his ordained associates, a priest, is necessary. As leader he enables the community to enter into communion, yet all are actively engaged in what is a truly community activity. So passive assistance at the Eucharist must give way to active and personal participation. In this community celebration not only the local community, the people visibly present, take part but the whole community of the Church through the power and presence of its head, Jesus Christ, realizes and revitalises itself.

In discussing the relations of the Roman Church *ad extra*, with other Christians (*Decree on Ecumenism*), with men of other religions (*Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions*), and with all men (*Declaration on Religious Freedom, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*), the community to community relationship with the respect for truth and freedom and the desire for increased unity in love provides a key to understanding the change in perspective as between the conciliar and pre-conciliar statements on these topics.

As theology remains the attempt to interpret the Word of

God to his world at any particular time, it is clear that its developments are not born of any ecclesiastical introspection but of the dialectic between the Word and the world. The increased interest in the theology of community has been anticipated and stimulated by philosophical, sociological, and political thinking of that wider world to which theologians and Council Fathers also belong. The encyclicals of John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris* and *Mater et Magistra*, as well as those of Paul VI, *Ecclesiam Suam* and *Populorum Progressio*, were particular and profound tributes to the current secular preoccupation at these different levels with man as a community being. It is in this context of theological and secular thinking about community that the theme of Christian morality as a community morality was chosen for discussion.

The Christian ethic is based on God's self-giving to man in Christ where that divine self-giving becomes an invitation to human response. God establishes a relationship with man which becomes the true meaning of man's life, his ultimate fulfilment, and which although given by God must be expressed and achieved in human living. To understand this relationship established in Christ and the ethic it entails, it is necessary to understand that from the beginning God's call to man was addressed to him as community.

The relationship which God sought to establish with man was always with man in community, with a people. So the individual found himself addressed by God as a member of a community or people. He encountered God in community, by being incorporated into God's people. And he had to live out his own relationship with God, make his own response to God, in other words behave morally, in community as a community being. The ethic of revelation or the human response demanded by the divine self-giving, is a community ethic in the basic sense that it is given to or arises for man in community and must be lived by him in community. And this applies to its preparatory stage as realized in the history of the people of Israel as well as to its definitive stage realized in the person of Jesus Christ.

The history of Israel as recorded for us in the books of the

Old Testament is the history of Yahweh's dealings with a people, his giving of himself to a people, the response this involved for them, and the actual response they made. The centre and climax of this history is the Sinaitic (Mosaic) covenant. Through the experience of the Exodus the Israelites have been prepared for this new stage in their relationship with Yahweh.

"And Moses went up to God and the Lord called him out of the mountain saying, 'Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the people of Israel: You have seen what I did to the Egyptians and how I have borne you on eagles' wings, and brought you to myself. Now, therefore, if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all peoples'" (Ex. 19, 3-5). The covenant involved for the Israelites a commitment to living as God's people as outlined above all in the Decalogue.

And God spoke all these words, saying,  
 "I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.  
 You shall have no other gods before me.  
 You shall not make yourself a graven image . . .  
 You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain . . .  
 Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy . . .  
 Honor your father and your mother . . .  
 You shall not kill . . ." (Ex. 20, 1-17; see Deut. 5, 6 ff.)

The Decalogue and the wider Mosaic law formed the way of life of a people covenanted or bound to God by this special agreement. It arose out of the relationship between God and his people.

This covenant and this people looked at once backward to the origins of the people of Israel and of all mankind, and forward to the fulfilment of Israel and of all mankind. The Exodus itself was initiated and achieved solely by the power of Yahweh who identified himself to Moses as the God of Israel's fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob (Ex. 3, 6) who also "established a covenant with them." Seeing their

sufferings in Egypt he remembered his covenant and decided to deliver them.

This covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was also with a people of whom they were like Moses at Sinai, the representatives (Gen. 12 ff). And the sign of the covenant, circumcision (Gen. 17, 10; Acts 7, 8), became the way of incorporation into the people, the acceptance by the individual of the people's relationship with God and the consequent way of life.

Harking back still further, the covenant between Yahweh and Noah reveals the same structure. God's self-giving is to man-in-community asking them to live as his people. (Gen. 8). And so to the Hebrew understanding of the origins of the cosmos and mankind, where Yahweh as creator and Lord of heaven and earth and of all men established a special relationship with all men through their first representative. The disruption of this relationship was the source of all evil in the world, evil manifested most obviously at the human level by the divisions between men, husband turning against wife (Adam and Eve, Gen. 3), brother against brother (Cain and Abel, Gen. 4), until "the earth was corrupt in God's sight and the earth was filled with violence" (Gen. 6).

It was only God's persistent care for man that could overcome these divisions. As that care assumed concrete historical shape it became a relationship with people through their representatives, but this people in turn represented all mankind, as Yahweh made clear to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: "By you all the families of the earth will bless themselves" (Gen. 12, 3; see 26, 4; 28, 18).

The covenant between God and his people which was the formal expression of the relationship between them was to be an "everlasting" one (Gen. 17, 13; Ex. 31, 16; Lev. 24, 8). Despite the infidelity of the people, Yahweh remains faithful, renews the covenant, and promises through his prophets a new covenant and a new people which would be the definite expression of his relationship with all mankind on earth (see Is. 42, 6; Jer. 31; Ezek. 16, 60).

The new relationship became a fact in the person of Jesus

Christ. The divine self-giving to mankind reached its earthly completion when God the Son became man. The human response reached its fullness in the obedient love of Jesus Christ. In him the new covenant was established (Lk. 22, 20; 1 Cor 11, 25; Heb. 8–12). And it was again to a community, a people, that this covenant was given. As a community in which there was now no distinction between Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female, the relationship is extended to all men without exception. And it is a relationship with a people, a new people of God, a new Israel. By being baptized into Christ (Rom. 6) one becomes a member of the body of Christ (see 1 Cor. 12) which constitutes the new people, encounters God as Father by sharing the sonship of Christ and undertakes the way of life appropriate to this community. The whole of the New Testament emphasizes the community dimension of Christianity and how one may come to the Father only through the Christ, by becoming a member of Christ, entering into community with him and one's fellow man. As a response to the divine self-giving in Christ the Christian ethic is an inescapably community reality.

The argument so far has based itself on the salvation history approach of God to man, that he approached man in community. But could he in fact have approached man in any other way? To encounter any particular man means to encounter a community, the community which formed this man, of which he is a member. To be human means to belong to some community, to be a product of it and to contribute to it, to share its destiny, its language, and its way of life to some minimal degree. It is to be the centre of a network of human relationships, however few and tenuous they may be. In encountering a human being, then, one encounters all this. In speaking to a particular person, in entering into a relationship with him, it is not possible to isolate him from his community. Even God could not do this. So that he too had to encounter man in community, to speak to him as a community being, to establish a relationship with him in community. The ethic or way of life which derived from this

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relationship had necessarily, then, a community dimension, based on God's self-giving to man in community.

### 2. THE CHRISTIAN ETHIC UNDERSTOOD IN COMMUNITY

The second reason why the Christian ethic should be described as a community ethic is that as it is given to and received in community, it can be understood only in community.

All human understanding is community understanding in the sense that the individual can arrive at it only in some community. The process of human understanding depends on learning a language, a community possession and, at the beginning at least, on receiving from one's immediate familial, local, and wider community basic information, ideas, and ideals. It is in the growing interchange with the various communities into which he is gradually incorporated that a man acquires his specialized or professional understanding (of chemistry, for example, by belonging to the chemistry community) as well as his over-all understanding of life. This understanding is not the predetermined product of his social environment, however widely that term is taken. Even in a scientific field, through his assimilation of what is already available, he can still make a personal contribution and enrich the community understanding by some new discovery or insight. In the more recognized personal and creative fields of literature, music, or art the personal contribution is more obvious, although still based on the community inheritance and education in these fields, and constitutes in turn a community enrichment. Where a vision of life is concerned, the person-community dialectic is particularly intense. The dependence of the person on previous community understanding and his contribution in turn to future community understanding constitute a rich dialogue. Even where the accepted community understanding is personally rejected at one level, this is always done by somebody developed in community and drawing on broader contemporary community ideas or on

earlier historical community understanding. The philosophical, ethical, or religious genius who makes a genuine breakthrough moves from certain inherited community ideas to provide a new or deeper understanding for a community.

All this applies to Christian understanding and a Christian vision of life (Christian ethic) as much as to anything else. The history of God's approach to man as outlined earlier confirms this. As God approached man in community, gave himself to a community, this self-giving and what it involved for man had always to be understood in community. The great religious leaders of the Old Testament like Abraham and Moses were community leaders. It was in the community as it acquired more concrete shape that through the direction of its kings like David and Solomon, the liturgical instruction and activity of its priests, the counsel of its wisdom writers, and the inspiration of its great prophets like Isaiah, Ezechiel, and Jeremiah, the individual Israelite came to know the will of Yahweh, the way of life that was expected of him as a member of God's chosen people. The creation and collection of the Old Testament scriptures which formed a norm of the community understanding were properly speaking community activities. Indeed, the bible as a whole is a community book, written in community, by a community, for a community.

So all this applies equally to the New Testament both as a new covenant or relationship established between God and man in the person of Jesus Christ and as a collection of normative writings about this relationship. They are both community realities and can be understood only in community.

The new people of Israel has its life-giving centre in Jesus Christ and it finally is made an historical, dynamic teaching community in the world by the gift of the Spirit at Pentecost. It enters the world to bring to it its own understanding of God's self-revelation in Jesus and what this involves for mankind. On the basis of its own experience now brought to mind and more deeply grasped in the light of the Spirit, the Pentecostal community preaches the good news to others and incorporates them into the community of faith, of true recognition and understand-

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ing of God and of the way of life this implies. Understanding the Christian way of life is understanding the faith, the faith as it must be lived. And this takes place within the Christian community.

There are a number of factors in this community understanding that should be mentioned here. As an understanding of God in his self-giving, it is for the community first of all a gift from God, an aspect of God's self-giving to man in the form of the enlightening Spirit, whereby we recognize God and call him Father (Rom. 8, 15 f.).

This gift, however, does not destroy man's understanding but transforms and illuminates it. The implications of revelation can only be progressively understood by the community. Such progressive understanding follows the laws of human understanding as men explore the fuller meaning of the gift that has been given them. The enlightenment of the Spirit, whereby the community receives and maintains its basic recognition of God speaking to men in Christ, does not absolve the community from the human task of seeking to understand ever more fully this revelation. This is a community task and so it is an historical task as successive generations of Christians, building on the understanding of their predecessors, try to understand and explain God in his living Word in a way relevant and intelligible to their time.

This process of historical development applies in a particularly complex way to understanding *the way of life* which God's self-giving demands. As societies and civilizations change and develop, the problems of living as a Christian change and develop. The questions that faced the first Christians and their first Council about the Gentiles and Jewish observances no longer bother us. Neither do the difficulties Christians encountered as members of the Roman armies. But every civilization, every society, indeed every generation faces new questions, new problems, new possibilities. Today, the problems and possibilities of common worship with other Christians, of mixed marriages, of living in various pluralist societies, of the bomb, of population, segregation, and so on, have replaced earlier and different problems. They pose new questions to the Christian community and

demand new answers, answers in which the basic God-man and man-man relationship revealed in Christ is maintained, and answers which build on and develop the inherited wisdom and reflexion of previous generations, but yet new answers for new people with new problems.

It is the task of the whole Christian community to provide these answers by using all the resources of the community. Every member of the community has an obligation to contribute to arriving at these answers insofar as he can. The contribution will vary from person to person and from problem to problem. For some their contribution will be that of immediate living experience, whether it is a matter of social justice, peace and war, or sex and marriage. Others will have some special professional competence, as medical men or economists or social workers, which is relevant to a particular problem. Others will be professionally engaged in interpreting the word of God to the people of a particular place and time as doctrine teachers or theologians or pastors or bishops. The understanding and knowledge of all these has to be coordinated as effectively as possible so that the community as a whole may be able to have the best Christian understanding possible at the time.

This kind of coordination demands great energy and goodwill on the part of everybody concerned. It also demands certain channels through which the ideas and information may flow. Few enough of these channels exist as yet. And finally, of course, the coordination depends on that basic structure given to the community by Christ whereby Peter and the apostles and after them their successors provide a unifying service in the community, articulate authoritatively, and in some instances definitively, the community understanding and pronounce it in genuine continuity with the historic, if developing, understanding of the community established by Jesus Christ and now living in him. To enable the apostolic college to perform this service as well as possible the community as a whole must perform its tasks.

It is important to remember here that the Christian community has a representative role, as sign and realization of God's

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giving of himself to all men. All men are faced with the same basic structure of reality, the God-man relationship in Jesus Christ. Even when they do not explicitly understand this basis they can and do in their living activity and in their reflexion attain a great deal of insight into how men should behave and live in the actual situation in which they are. Not only then do we learn from the wider world much of the scientific knowledge relevant to our ethical understanding. We must also learn from their own ethical example and reflexion. And they may well have in a particular area a more refined ethical understanding than that as yet attained by the Christian community. The resources available to the Christian community include those of the whole human community of which it is part, that part in which God's self-giving to man in Christ is explicitly recognized. The self-giving is in fact to the total community and so the understanding depends on and should use the resources of the total community.

The community understanding will always be capable of further development because of man's historical condition. It may well be deficient even so far as this stage of development is concerned because of man's inherent weakness for which the Holy Spirit cannot always atone. As understanding of the Christian community it will then have varying degrees of authority and certainty. And it will have the necessary characteristic of all community understanding and formulation that it will be in general terms, outlining the basic structure of the Christian life or of a particular area in it. Insofar as the basic structure is properly understood and expressed it will be verified in the particular person's individual situation, but how that basic structure is to take definite shape in a personal action may vary enormously. Here the creative capacity of the individual person must be taken into account as he responds to God and to neighbour within the community and using all the resources available to him from the community, yet in accordance with his own unique vocation, his own irreducible personality. To ignore or eliminate this uniqueness or irreducibility would be to destroy the community by turning it into an ant-heap. The

personal understanding should integrate the community understanding insofar as that is truly expressive of the basic structure of reality in any area of moral activity. This could also be described by saying that such understandings or formulations express the elementary directions of moral activity. This is where some situationists make their mistake, ignoring or denying such a basic structure or at least its intelligibility. But not all community formulations express adequately this basic structure or elementary direction and even where they do, the personal action is much more than its basic structure or elementary direction and may be realized in innumerable forms and degrees. To ignore or deny this personal and creative aspect of moral activity has been the failure of the legal approach to morality.

### 3. THE CHRISTIAN ETHIC: FOR THE BUILDING OF A COMMUNITY

God spoke to man in community and his word can be properly understood only in community. The purpose and consequence of this speaking to man is the formation of a community. It is at this level that the community dimension of the Christian ethic most forcibly appears. The Word or self-giving of God to mankind forms mankind into a community. This is at once a gift and a task (*donum et mandatum*), something given and something yet to be achieved. The true response of man to God's gift is the promotion of the community of mankind, the development of mankind as God's people. Whatever human activity then promotes this community is a correct response to God, morally good activity; whatever activity hinders or disrupts the community is a failure in response, morally bad activity. Community building becomes the criterion or norm of morality. It is for this reason above all that one speaks of the Christian ethic as a community ethic.

To understand and establish this claim it is necessary to look again at the history of God's dealings with mankind in both the Old and New Testaments. The covenant on Sinai was a covenant

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with a people, but it was at the same time constitutive of a people. It was the climax to the events of the Exodus whereby God undertook the formation of the Israelites into a unified people with a distinct vocation in the world. It was his choice that made them a people, his people. By the acceptance of this covenant and the living of it they become not only united with him but also with one another. The moral demands of this covenant as enshrined in the Decalogue comprise obligations to Yahweh and to one another. These two are inseparable. So that if the Israelites will obey Yahweh's voice and keep his covenant they shall really become his people, "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Ex. 19, 5 f.).

Their failure to do this results in their punishment and dispersal from time to time. The post-Sinai history of Israel parallels the pre-Sinai history of mankind with God's call to man being directed towards his development in unity or community by the use of the world's resources and with man's failure to respond to God resulting in division among themselves. The Adam and Eve story stresses their community both in origin and in love relationship, their distinction from the rest of the world and yet their harmonious lordship of it so long as they continued in the relationship of loving obedience with the Creator. The immediate consequence of their failure was division from each other, as shown in their covering of themselves and in Adam's blaming of the woman. The more profound human divisions caused by sin emerge in the following Cain and Abel story and in the events leading up to the Flood. The story of the Tower of Babel highlights the tragic division between men. In such close physical contiguity they were yet unable to speak to one another. The successive efforts of Yahweh through Noah and Abraham, through Moses and the prophets, are directed towards the formation of a people, a community through whom salvation would come to all mankind. The covenants, the other historical events, and the prophetic and wisdom literature are at once the product of a people (through God's self-giving) and constitutive of that people. It is God's Word to man that first of all establishes the

human community at its true level. (Problems of monogenism and polygenism must be considered separately and are secondary to this basic truth). The further growth of this community (a necessary dimension because of man's historical character) is distorted from the beginning by man's sin and is constantly threatened by sin. It is only the persistent loving of Yahweh that overcomes this distortion and makes the community of mankind continually possible.

When that persistent loving took concrete shape in the person of Jesus Christ a new stage in the realization of the community of mankind was reached. Jesus' mission of redemption was the reconciliation of man with the Father and of man with man. The Father's love in sending his Son was the full expression of God's self-giving to man by becoming man, by entering into the human condition. The response which this demanded of man reached its fullness in the self-surrender of the man Jesus out of love for the Father and for mankind. By his life, death, and resurrection Jesus Christ manifested God's way to man and man's way to God. The fruit of this was given to the world by the Pentecostal community and the miracle of tongues, which, neatly counterpointing the divisions of Babel, shows the new communication possible between men.

This was achieved for man in community. The community was of course to be God's people, the new Israel. It was meant for all men whether Jew or Gentile. But the basic source of its unity is manifest in Jesus Christ because all men are called to be united with him as sons (and daughters) of the Father and so brothers (and sisters) of one another. The unity of mankind is now seen not to rest on any biological, psychological, or sociological basis but on a theological one, in the literal sense of that term as pertaining to *Theou logos*, the word of God. God's Word addressed to men is the basis of their unity. In the light of the New Testament revelation that Word is the personal being of the Second Person of the Trinity become man. In him and through him men exist, develop, and achieve their destiny, fulness of union with the Father and with one another.

It was because the true being of man was founded in this

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relationship of sonship and brotherhood that Jesus could summarize the whole law and the prophets as love of God and love of neighbour. The primacy of charity in Christian teaching and living derives from this relational reality which men enjoy with the Father and with one another, a reality arising from the fact that God first loved us (1 Jn. 4, 10).

This is a single relational reality. Sonship of the Father equals brotherhood of Christ equals brotherhood of all men. There can be no question of separating them. It is impossible to love the Father without loving one another (1 Jn. 4, 20). While this reality and the recognition of it in love of God and of neighbour existed in the Old Testament (see Deut. 6, 5; Lev. 19, 18) it only appeared in its true dimension with the coming of the only-begotten Son of the Father. Because of the indivisibility of love of God and love of neighbour, Jesus would describe love of neighbour as the new commandment (Jn. 18, 34), the distinguishing sign of his followers (Jn. 13, 35), and the final criterion by which all men should be judged (Mt. 25, 31 ff.). Paul in his turn could reduce the whole law to simply love of neighbour (Rom. 13, 8–10; Gal. 5, 4). This is what the self-giving of God to the community demands, for God is love (I Jn. 4, 16).

It is in the visible community of the Church that God's self-giving in Christ and his call to man to respond in this way breaks the surface, becomes perceptible in a human manner (*Lumen gentium*, ch. 1). The Church exists as a sign and realization of God's community-forming love in the world (*ibid.*). It does not exist for its own sake but for the sake of mankind, to help form the true community of mankind or better to assist this community which in virtue of God's self-giving to mankind already exists to emerge more fully, to grow and develop (see *Gaudium et spes*, art. 77 ff.).

The call to all men, then, is the call to the formation and development of the true human community. It is only in this community that the individual person reaches his own fulfilment. Wholly dependent at first on the resources of the community, as he matures he contributes to the community by his responsi-

ble human activity which is then judged to be good or bad as it is developing of the community or disruptive of it.

It is only in the Christian perspective that such a community ethic can be properly understood. And it is only in the Christian perspective that certain limitations inevitable in all efforts at building community can be understood.

Because man is an historical being, the human community is always building, always capable of further progress. A community ethic is necessarily a dynamic one. Because man enjoys a certain irreducible dignity as the term of divine and human love and as source of love in his turn, the community cannot develop by the suppression or elimination or diminishment of the individual person. A Christian community ethic is necessarily a personal ethic. Because man has failed in love and so in his community relations, because he continually fails in some degree and is always threatened by total failure, the progress in community building is always ambiguous. A breakthrough in the technological or political unification of mankind does not necessarily bring an equal breakthrough in the growth of true human community. Yet it is with and through these technological, political, and other human means that men must work for the fuller and more genuine community of mankind.

Because in spite of man's failure the true community of mankind is based on the unfailing love of God manifested in Jesus Christ and proclaimed by his Church, the human community can never entirely break down and is assured of ultimate completion. But precisely because the complete unity of men with each other implies their complete unity with the Father, this complete unity lies beyond history, is eschatological. Then and only then will mankind share the fulness of sonship of the Father and of brotherhood with one another in the risen Christ.

It is for this final unity that the Church, that Christians, are working. But they have to work at it now. Their call is to enter fully into the task of developing the human community here on earth through the use of all resources, human and divine, available to them. In this way they promote the kingdom of God on earth, release men from the bonds of sin and selfishness,

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and humanize (Christianize) the cosmos by developing it in the service of mankind. In pursuit of this goal they seek to work with all men of goodwill in any project that will realize further the God-given unity of mankind. Because of their explicit awareness of the basis of this unity or community they will more urgently enter into the task of achieving it and, while aware of the limitations of what may be humanly possible, never lose hope in the reconciling power of God's love.

The call of all men is to the building of the human community. All good human activity is community building activity. The true human ethic is a community ethic in this sense. For the Christian this call, finally manifest in Christ, comes from the Father, was given to man in community, can be understood only by man in community, and is directed towards the building of the true human community founded on man's sonship of the Father and brotherhood with one another, both of which derive from and are manifest in Jesus Christ.

## 19.

### RELIGIOUS RENEWAL AND ETHNIC-SOCIAL PRESSURES AS FORMS OF LIFE IN CHRISTIAN HISTORY

GERHART B. LADNER

INTERNAL reform and external pressure: what is the mutual relationship between these fundamental categories of life in the history of Christian peoples and Christian society? To what extent were Christian ideas of renewal effective in the improvement of the lot of man or of society and to what extent did such effectiveness, if it existed, interact with pressures that came from other sources? This is a problem which is obviously far too great to be dealt with fully in a short paper, or perhaps even to be treated by only one person. I must on the whole restrict myself to my own field, the Middle Ages; only at the end shall I attempt to connect that remote, but nevertheless living, past to more modern and recent times. Even within the Middle Ages I must limit myself to the reconsideration of two well-known areas of successive change in Western medieval history: the decline and renewal of empire in relation to the Germanic Barbarians and the foundation of urban communes in relation to serfdom and liberty.

## THE ROMAN AND MEDIEVAL EMPIRES AND THE BARBARIANS

To introduce the first of my two main themes I may remind you of Charlemagne's imperial bull which bears the inscription *Renovatio Roman[i] Imp[erii]*.<sup>1</sup> What exactly does it mean that the first emperor of Germanic Barbarian origin here asserts his claim to renew the Roman Empire? It would seem that this meaning can be fully understood only after reviewing the relations between that empire and the Barbarians from the very beginning of their contacts.

The ancient Roman Empire was based on expansion and conquest, but had called a halt to the Barbarians through the *Pax Romana*. From the point of view of the Barbarians, however, this stabilization on the whole still meant subjection or exclusion, against which they reacted by increasingly violent attacks and rebellions. The Virgilian conception of Rome's mission, "pacisque imponere morem/Parcere subiectis et debellare superbos,"<sup>2</sup> corresponded to a very real achievement, but in the first centuries of the empire and outside Italy this achievement benefited only the relatively thin Romanized upper strata of the native societies. The Romans never willingly conceded to Barbarian peoples the right to share their wealth and political power on equal terms. It is true that in the social framework of the ancient world the contrary would have been most surprising, but it is also true that a final showdown with the Barbarians became thus unavoidable. Since in the great crises of Roman-Barbarian relations the Germanic element was of paramount importance, it will be sufficient for our purpose to concentrate attention on it.

<sup>1</sup> See P. E. Schramm, *Die zeitgenössischen Bildnisse Karls des Grossen*, Leipzig, 1928, pp. 26 ff.; *idem*, *Die deutschen Kaiser und Könige in Bildern ihrer Zeit*, Leipzig, 1928, text vol. 31 ff.; *idem*, "Karl der Grosse im Lichte seiner Siegel und Bullen," *Karl der Grosse: Lebenswerk und Nachleben*, I, Düsseldorf, 1965, pp. 18 f.

<sup>2</sup> *Aeneid*, VI, p. 852 f.

During the first recorded clash between Romans and Germans, the Cimbric war of the late second century B.C., something occurred that was typical of future events. The Cimbri, before the first battle, in which they were to be victorious, had asked the consul of M. Iunius Silanus to give them some land where they could settle; the Roman answer was immediate attack. After their victory the Cimbri sent an embassy to the Senate, repeating their request, and this was repeated a third time in fruitless negotiations with the Roman generals. The war was continued and ended with the final annihilation of the Cimbri by Marius.<sup>3</sup> Half a century later, Ariovistus's plan to share the possession of Gaul with the Romans was rejected by Caesar.<sup>4</sup> Large scale attempts at counteroffensives against the German tribes between the Rhine and the Elbe under Augustus, and to the north of the Danube under Marcus Aurelius were not successful, but the Rhine and Danube frontiers seemed secure. Some emperors settled limited numbers of Barbarians, often captives, within the borders of the Roman Empire, especially in the Danube provinces, Gaul, and Northern Italy, more often than not in deserted regions. In most of these cases the settlers attained only the relatively depressed status of *coloni*, *dediticii*, or *laeti* and were considered largely as a reservoir of recruits.<sup>5</sup> As is well known, there occurred a spectacular increase and rise of Barbarians in the Roman army during the last

<sup>3</sup> For these events see L. Schmidt, *Geschichte der deutschen Stämme bis zum Ausgang der Völkerwanderung: Die Westgermanen*, I, Munich, 1938, pp. 3 ff.; also *idem*, "Die Ursachen der Völkerwanderung," *Neue Jahrbücher für das klassische Altertum, Geschichte und deutsche Literatur*, VI (1903), pp. 340 ff.

<sup>4</sup> *De bello gallico*, I, 44.

<sup>5</sup> For these settlements of Barbarians see, for instance, A. Graf Schenk von Stauffenberg, "Die Germanen im römischen Reich," *Das Imperium und die Völkerwanderung*, Munich, n.d., pp. 7 ff.; V. A. Sirago, *Galla Placidia e la trasformazione politica dell'Occidente*, Louvain, 1961, pp. 499 f.; R. MacMullen, "Barbarian Enclaves in the Roman Empire," *L'Antiquité classique*, XXXII (1963), pp. 552 ff.; J. Gagé, *Les classes sociales dans l'empire romain*, Paris, 1964, p. 361; A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire, 284-602*, Norman, 1964, pp. 619 ff.; L. Musset, *Les Invasions: Les Vagues germaniques*, Paris, 1965, pp. 177, 224 f.

centuries of the Empire. This development is usually and rightly regarded as a symptom of the decline of military virtue among the Romans, but it is equally significant with regard to the Roman attitude to the Barbarians. They were considered good enough to fight Roman battles, but remained excluded as long as possible from full ownership of rural or municipal property and from a share in civil offices and honors. They were feared and admired for their warlike qualities; from Constantine the Great onward they might individually rise to high military and even civil positions. Nevertheless, they remained suspect and often despised as human beings. The period from the third to the fifth century is characterized not only by the increasing aggressiveness of the external Barbarians but also by rebellions of long conquered native populations such as the Quingentanii and Circumcelliones in Africa and the Bagaudae in Gaul. All this did not prevent the emperors of that period, Christian as well as pagan, from constantly asserting, on their coins and through other means of propaganda, the rebirth, restitution, reparation, renovation of imperial peace and of happy times during their reign.<sup>6</sup>

It is interesting to study the initial reaction of Christianity to the situation.<sup>7</sup> The consensus of the Church remained distinctly Roman, that is to say, hostile to the Barbarians, as well as to internal rebels, such as the Circumcelliones and Bagaudae. One important reason for this attitude was of course the fact that almost all of these groups were pagans or heretics. It is significant that a great bishop such as St. Ambrose of Milan had no qualms in dividing all non-Christian creatures into pagan peoples (*gentes*), Barbarians, and other animated beings; he thus placed Barbarians between Romans, even if they were

<sup>6</sup> See, for instance, H. Mattingly, "Felicium temporum reparatio," *The Numismatic Chronicle and Journal of the Royal Numismatic Society*, ser. V, XII (1933), 182 ff.; J. Gagé "Le «Templum Urbis» et les origines de l'idée de «Renovatio», " *Mélanges Franz Cumont*, I, Brussels, 1936, pp. 151 ff.

<sup>7</sup> For recent studies of this problem see, for instance, G. Tellenbach, "Germanentum und Reichsgedanke im früheren Mittelalter," *Historisches Jahrbuch*, LXII-LXIX (1949), 109 ff.; M. Meslin, "Nationalisme, état et religions," *Archives de sociologie des religions*, IX (1964), 3 ff.

pagan, and animals. It is true that Ambrose made this statement in a rather special context, in which he spoke of the violation of Christian virgins by the Barbarians.<sup>8</sup> But only a little later the great Ibero-Roman Christian poet Prudentius asserted in a quite general way, that Barbarians are as different from Romans as quadripeds are from bipeds.<sup>9</sup> Still, there were exceptions, such as the well-known one of Salvianus, who in the early fifth century expressed some regard for Barbarians and rebels, in comparison with the corrupt Romans.<sup>10</sup>

The consensus of the great Church would change only if and when the Barbarians not only had succeeded in establishing themselves in independent kingdoms on Roman soil but also had become Catholic. Nevertheless, long before Clovis, the Frank, was to adopt Catholicism as the first of the Barbarian kings and was to be hailed as a new Constantine by the Frankish bishops, the most Catholic Emperor Theodosius had been forced after the disastrous battle of Adrianople, in which the Emperor Valens had perished, to concede to the Arian Visigoths what the Roman Empire had refused to Barbarians for so many centuries: free settlement on Roman land within the Empire. For this action Theodosius has been both blamed and praised by his contemporaries and modern historians alike. His magnanimous treatment of the old and exiled king of the Visigoths, Athanaric, to whom he gave a splendid funeral at Constantinople, may reveal a sympathetic mood towards the Goths, but there can be little doubt that the Emperor's treaty with them, which stipulated the cession of vast tracts of Roman territory in Thrace and Macedonia, was at least as much the result of pressure as of good will and that it came too late to lead to a satisfactory lasting symbiosis between Romans and Barbarians which would have left the framework of the Empire intact. The Barbarians soon demanded and took more than Theodosius

<sup>8</sup> St. Ambrose, *De virginibus*, I, 4, 14; see P. Brezzi, "Romani e Barbari nel giudizio degli scrittori cristiani dei secoli IV-VI," *Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sul Alto Medioevo*, IX, Spoleto, 1962, pp. 565 ff.

<sup>9</sup> *Contra Symmachum*, II, 816-819; see Brezzi, *loc. cit.*

<sup>10</sup> *De gubernatione Dei*, VI, 8, 39 ff., V, 5, 21 ff.

and even his weak successors were willing to give, they occupied entire countries within the Empire. But in their eyes this did not necessarily mean a break with the Empire, but, at least in the case of the Goths, rather the acquisition of a viable domicile within it. It is well known that the Visigoth Ataulf and the Ostrogoth Theodoric felt as preservers and renovators of the Roman Empire. There is no reason to doubt the substance of Orosius's story, allegedly based on the account of an intimate friend of Ataulf's, according to whom this Gothic king in his later years saw himself no longer as an *immutator* of the Romania into a Gothia, but as *Romae restitutionis auctor*.<sup>11</sup> After he had married the captive daughter of the great Theodosius, Galla Placidia, he called their son after the boy's maternal grandfather, no doubt hoping that the young Theodosius would sooner or later occupy the throne of the old.

If the phrase *Romae restitutionis auctor* is based on fact, as it may well be since it corresponds to an old numismatic, epigraphic, and literary tradition of the Empire, we have here the first evidence of a Barbarian ruler's claim to renovate the Roman Empire. Little need be said to point out that about a hundred years later this thought was the overriding motive of Theodoric's policy, as we know it from his letters, formulated and preserved in Cassiodorus's *Variae*.<sup>12</sup> He saw his position as ruler as following the pattern of imperial rule; it was his wish to call all things back to their pristine state as well as to change all things for the better. Such ideas belong to the old heritage of Christian renewal ideology. They are here related to a sacred optimism concerning the Christian Empire which had been so characteristic of it since Constantine and Eusebius, and which was to dominate Byzantine imperial theory.

Perhaps it was the destruction of the Ostrogothic Kingdom by Justinian which more than anything else destroyed optimistic views among the Barbarians of the Roman Empire at Constantinople. Procopius relates the bitter words which King Totila is said to have uttered during the last struggles of the

<sup>11</sup> *Historia adversus paganos*, 7, 43, 4 ff.

<sup>12</sup> See I, 1; III, 31; II, 21.

Ostrogoths against imperial armies: it sounds like an echo from the times of the Cimbri and of Arioivistus when Totila reproached the Roman Senate for begrudging the Goths any land in the Empire, be it even the most desolate.<sup>18</sup>

Unlike the Ostrogoths, the Lombards of Italy were from the beginning hostile to the Byzantine Empire, while the Visigoths since Euric, and the Franks since Clovis no longer acted or felt as if their territory had once been part of the Empire.

Meanwhile, even among Catholic Romans of the West the leading spirits had, since the early fifth century, begun to detach themselves ideologically from the Empire. The political, *Basileia* theology of the age of Constantine and Theodosius, of Eusebius and Ambrose, was overshadowed by the a-political, *Civitas-Dei* theology of Augustine, and by the hierarchical, Petrine ecclesiology of Leo the Great and Gelasius.

The claim of the Christian Roman Empire to renew the world through internal and external conversion—though it was carried on by the liturgy—became less and less convincing in the West, not only because of the decline of imperial power, but also because of the involvement of Byzantium in a long sequence of heresies. Conversion and mission among the Western Barbarians was not the work of the Empire, but of the monks, bishops, and popes.

It is therefore not surprising that Roman imperial renewal ideology experienced great changes, at least from the late sixth century onward. Isidore of Seville no longer believed that the Roman Empire, or more exactly its continuation in the Byzantine Empire, was destined to rule over all peoples until the end of time; he did not with the Byzantines see this Empire as the terrestrial representation of the *Regnum Dei* or *Imperium Christi*. The same holds true for the Anglo-Saxon Bede and for the Lombard Paulus Diaconus, who expressed the conviction of their peoples that they were equal to the Romans in their standing within the kingdom of Christ on earth.<sup>14</sup> Among all Barbarian peoples the Franks, at least since the mid eighth

<sup>18</sup> *De bello gothico*, III, 21.

<sup>14</sup> For Isidore, Bede, and Paul the Deacon see H. Löwe, *Von Theoderich dem Grossen zu Karl dem Grossen*, Darmstadt, 1958, pp. 17 ff.

century, had begun to develop the strongest sense of a vocation, which made them see themselves as a new elect people of God, a view in which they were confirmed by the papacy, which about the same time had finally and definitively given up all lingering confidence in the restoration ideology of the Eastern Roman Empire.<sup>15</sup>

It is true that the papacy led the greatest Barbarian power of the West, the Franks, back into the orbit of Roman imperial ideology, which the Barbarians had abandoned as a result chiefly of Justinian's ephemeral reconquest; but this return occurred under ecclesiastical auspices and was not conceived in a new way. Papal-Carolingian relations, from the transformation of the *Patricius* title on behalf of Pepin to the Coronation of Charlemagne, and beyond that to the end of the Carolingian Empire, are permeated by the conviction that this new people, the Franks, were to bring about a fuller Christianization of the West, and even of the whole world. The Barbarians of old had become the true Christian Romans, the true renovators of empire. Thus in a certain sense, Pepin and Charlemagne vindicated the political conceptions of Ataulf and Theodoric.

This brings us back to Charlemagne's imperial bull with the inscription *Renovatio Roman[i] Imp[erii]*. Confronted with such monuments and documents of Carolingian imperial ideology, modern historians without exception have interpreted them as manifesting the undeniable fact that on Christmas Day, 800, the West received a new emperor. Some historians, of course, did not ignore the fact that expressions such as *renovatio imperii* were quite common programmatic, Christian as well as pagan, *topoi* through which late ancient imperial ideology had stated or postulated imperial reform or revival. It is equally well known that Charlemagne had a low opinion of the religious and ethical level of that Roman Empire which had vigorously continued to exist in Constantinople, that is to say, of the Byzantine Empire.

<sup>15</sup> It may be noted that in the early Middle Ages the idea and reality of the Church as all the people of God were vindicated by the papacy against imperial theocracy (first Byzantine, later Western), long before anybody could clearly envisage the tension and dialogue in the Church between the hierarchy and the people of God.

of his own day.<sup>16</sup> But strangely enough the continued existence of the Roman Empire at Byzantium and the Carolingian criticism of it have never been consistently linked to the renewal ideology of the so-called Carolingian Renaissance. It seems very probably to me that it was not the main purpose of Charlemagne's inscription *Renovation Romani Imperii*, or of the ideology which it represents, to assert the claim that a new Roman Empire had now been founded in the West. There is no evidence that an attempt was made to link the Carolingian Empire directly to the rule of the last Roman emperors of the West, of a Romulus Augustulus, or even an Honorius.<sup>17</sup>

I should therefore like to propose a new interpretation of the literal meaning and the spiritual content of the Carolingian *Renovatio Imperii*. This conception of *Renovatio*, in my opinion, expressed above all the hope for the *internal* renewal of the empire, in accordance with the scriptural-patristic idea of the renewal of man.<sup>18</sup> In the eyes of the contemporaries, it meant nothing less than the internal renewal of an Empire that had never disappeared, though it had been corrupted in the East and existed only ideally in the West—the renewal in other words of the Christian Roman Empire of Constantine the Great and the fulfilment of what that Empire could have been and had not become.<sup>19</sup> If the Carolingian *Renovatio* meant a new beginning of the Imperium Romanum, it did so in a secondary manner at most; in the first place it meant the making new of the idea of the old Empire.

<sup>16</sup> See the *Libri Carolini* (*MGH, Conc. II, Suppl.*), in which Charlemagne objects not only to Byzantine image worship and iconoclasm, but also to Byzantine emperor worship and to what he considered as Byzantine arrogance and perfidy in general; see also W. v. d. Steinen, "Entstehungsgeschichte der *Libri Carolini*," *Quellen und Forschungen aus italienischen Archiven und Bibliotheken*, XXI (1929–30), especially 70 ff.; H. Fichtenau, "Karl der Grosse und das Kaisertum," *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung*, LXI (1953), 276 ff.

<sup>17</sup> Contrary to the assertion of W. Goez, *Translatio Imperii*, Tübingen, 1958, p. 68.

<sup>18</sup> See my book, *The Idea of Reform*, Cambridge, 1959.

<sup>19</sup> See also H. Beumann, "Nomen Imperatoris," *Historische Zeitschrift*, CLXXXV (1958) 543; Löwe, *op cit.*, pp. 391 f.

One of the most important sources for the act of Christmas Day, 800, the *Annales Laureshamenses*,<sup>20</sup> clearly presupposes that the Empire had not disappeared, though the exercise of the imperial dignity had temporarily ceased to be legitimate in the East, where it was claimed by a woman, Irene; therefore it could be conferred upon Charlemagne who already held Rome and the other imperial cities of the West. Most importantly, the same text immediately connects the external renovation of the Empire with the inner renewal of the Roman Church by Charlemagne.

Only in passing may I refer to the much discussed imperial title of Charlemagne. He called himself not *imperator Romanorum* or *imperator Romanus*, but *Romanum gubernans imperium*,<sup>21</sup> thus again documenting the kinship of his imperial conception to that of an Ataulf or Theodoric.<sup>22</sup> He, too, saw himself as a ruler who governed a large part of the old Empire, which had never disappeared.

Since Constantine, the *Imperium Romanum* was an *Imperium Christianum*. Therefore its renewal was ever since closely linked to scriptural-patristic renewal ideology. Before as well as after the year 800, Charlemagne and his helpers considered it the task of the Frankish monarchy to emend, to reform, to renew

<sup>20</sup> 34–801; see Fichtenau, *op. cit.*, pp. 287 ff.; Beumann, *op. cit.*, pp. 525 ff. Concerning the vacancy of the *nomen imperatoris*, asserted in these Annals with regard to the “Greeks,” there exists in my opinion the possibility, almost ignored in the literature on the renovation of the Empire by Charlemagne (except for a brief remark by R. Folz, *Le Couronnement impérial de Charlemagne*, Paris, 1964, p. 112), that the text alludes among other things to the fact that the Byzantine emperors called themselves “Basileus” (literally, “King”), a title which the *Libri Carolini* about 787 had interpreted as “Rex,” as no more nor less imperial than the royal title which Charlemagne held at that time; see *Libri Carolini, in Monum. Germ. Hist., Concil. II, suppl.*, 3, 11. 26 and 29; see also W. Ohnsorge, *Das Zweikaiserproblem im früheren Mittelalter*, Hildesheim, 1947, pp. 18 f.

<sup>21</sup> See P. Classen, “*Romanum gubernans imperium*,” *Deutsches Archiv*, IX (1951–52), 103 ff.

<sup>22</sup> For the well-known transfer of a statue of Theodoric the Great from Ravenna to Aachen on orders of Charlemagne, see the recent study by H. Hoffmann, “*Die Aachener Theoderichstatue*,” *Das erste Jahrtausend*, I, Düsseldorf, 1963, pp. 318 ff.

Christian life.<sup>23</sup> This was a religious conception which was at first formulated in Old Testament terms: ever since Charlemagne's father Pepin, Carolingian rule was seen as a *regnum Davidicum*.<sup>24</sup> The Roman elements of this renewal, too, were predominantly Christian and ecclesiastical, liturgical and canonistic. We do not know who formulated the inscription *Renovatio Romani Imperii* on Charlemagne's bull, but he, too, in all probability had this *inner* renewal in mind.

In spite of his rejection of Irene's imperial dignity, because she was a woman, and in his eyes a wicked woman,<sup>25</sup> Charlemagne's idea of a *Renovatio Romani Imperii* was not meant to invalidate the existence of the Roman Empire at Constantinople, however corrupt it might be; on the contrary, it included the concept of coexistence of the two Empires.<sup>26</sup> Yet the new imperial ideology aimed at the renewal of the whole world through the Christian empire of the West, which would be the great model for all of Christendom.<sup>27</sup> This was a task which both imperial and ecclesiastical circles saw as having been inaugurated by the Roman Empire of Constantine, but as having been transferred now to the Barbarian Empire of Charlemagne. The Frankish theory of the *Translatio Imperii*<sup>28</sup> which appears less than half a century after Charlemagne's coronation,<sup>29</sup> is not a theory of the reestablishment of the Roman Empire which

<sup>23</sup> See P. E. Schramm, "Karl der Grosse: Denkart und Grundauffassungen—Die von ihm bewirkte Correctio ('Renaissance')," *Historische Zeitschrift*, CXXVIII (1964), 306 ff.

<sup>24</sup> See E. H. Kantorowicz, *Laudes Regiae*, Berkeley, 1946, pp. 56 ff.; R. Folz, *L'Ideé d'empire en occident du Ve au XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Paris, 1953, p. 26; *idem*, *Le Couronnement*, pp. 118 ff., 183; E. Ewig, "Zum christlichen Königsgedanken im Frühmittelalter," *Das Königtum*, Lindau, 1956, pp. 44 ff.

<sup>25</sup> See P. Classen, "Karl der Grosse, das Papsttum und Byzanz," *op. cit.*, p. 579.

<sup>26</sup> See Ohnsorge, *op. cit.*, pp. 9 f.

<sup>27</sup> See Alcuin's famous letter to Charlemagne, written shortly before the latter's imperial coronation, *Monum. Germ. Hist., Epistolae*, IV, 288.

<sup>28</sup> See W. Goez, *op. cit.*; P. A. van den Baar, *Die kirchliche Lehre der Translatio Imperii Romani bis zur Mitte des 13. Jahrhunderts*, *Analecta Gregoriana*, Rome, 1956.

<sup>29</sup> See G. Niemeyer, "Die Herkunft der Vita Willehadi," *Deutsches Archiv*, XII (1956), 17 ff.

Romulus Augustulus had lost in 476, but of the (partial) transfer of the Roman imperial dignity from its Byzantine representatives to a more worthy Barbarian ruler. Even in the third generation after Charlemagne, his great-grandson, the Emperor Lewis II, did not hesitate to intimate to the Byzantines that the Franks had set up a renewed exemplar of empire for the benefit of the Christian East as well as of the West.<sup>30</sup>

The interpretation of the *Renovatio* inscription of Charlemagne's imperial bull here suggested seems to be confirmed by the legend of the imperial bull of his successor Louis the Pious; it reads, *Renovatio Regni Francorum*, and is probably a repetition of the inscription on a lost late imperial bull of Charlemagne himself.<sup>31</sup> Here there can be no question of the reestablishment of an earlier Empire. The sense of the inscription is obviously that of internal renewal of the Frankish monarchy.<sup>32</sup>

In the mind of the contemporaries the significance of the act of Christmas Day, 800 consisted above all in the fact that the imperial dignity had been taken over by a ruler who was both a "Barbarian" and a Christian, who in his own mind and in the hopes of many was a truer Christian than not a few of the successors of Constantine, including the Byzantine emperors of his day.

Immediately after his imperial coronation, Charlemagne initiated a great reform program the Christian and Roman spirit of which, especially in legislation and administration of justice and peace, has been rightly stressed by modern historians.<sup>33</sup> Yet, it is not accidental that this program also included the incorporation of Germanic traditions in the framework of the new Empire. Charlemagne began—though he did not complete—the emendation of the written and the written fixation of the unwritten laws of the various Barbarian peoples of his Empire; he had the old Barbarian songs written down, he inspired a Frank-

<sup>30</sup> Lewis II to Basil I, 871, *Monum. Germ. Hist., Epist.* VII, 390.

<sup>31</sup> See Ohnsorge, "Renovatio Regni Francorum," *Abendland und Byzanz*, Darmstadt, 1958, pp. 111 ff.

<sup>32</sup> This inscription was carried on by several bulls of later Carolingian emperors; see Schramm, *op. cit.*, pp. 60 ff.

<sup>33</sup> See Folz, *Couronnement*, pp. 186 ff.

ish grammar, and gave to the months and winds Germanic names.<sup>84</sup>

Charlemagne endowed the idea of Empire with new life—as he did everything he touched.<sup>85</sup> The terms of imperial Roman renewal ideology, which had become sacred stereotypes, now again corresponded to action and reality. It is very questionable whether Charlemagne's Empire was in every respect more Christian than that of the Eastern Roman emperors of whom he thought so little. Yet his sincere concern for Christian renewal, his great and lasting conception of the internal renovation of an Empire inhabited by Roman and Barbarian Christians, can be considered as a final retort to the many failures of the Roman, Christian-Roman, and Byzantine Empires to deal equitably with the Barbarians. Charlemagne was the first Christian emperor who was a Barbarian. He finally achieved that which, if we disregard a few ephemeral usurpers, had been denied to all Barbarians before him: the highest dignity in the Roman Empire. After almost a millennium, Barbarian pressure finally reached a goal which earlier Christian renewal ideology had not been able to attain: full parity among the Christian peoples of the West, regardless of whether they came from outside or inside the Graeco-Roman world. The Carolingian *Renovatio Romani Imperii* was the terminal point of an essentially internal renewal of the idea of empire by the external pressure of Christianized Barbarians.<sup>86</sup>

<sup>84</sup> Einhard, *Vita Karoli*, 29, *Monum. Germ. Hist., Script.*, I; *Annal. Lauresham.*, 39; see Folz, *Couronnement*, pp. 188 ff.

<sup>85</sup> See W. v. d. Steinen, "Der Neubeginn," *op. cit.*, pp. 9 ff.

<sup>86</sup> Byzantium, the direct heir of the ancient Roman Empire, solved the problem of its relation to the Barbarians in its own sphere of influence in its own way—by establishing a hierarchy of quasi-familial relations between the emperor and the Barbarian kings and by assisting the Slavonic peoples in developing a liturgy and literature in their own languages. See F. Dölger, "Die Familie der Könige im Mittelalter," *Byzanz und die europäische Staatenwelt*, Ettal, 1953, pp. 34 ff.; G. Ostrogorsky, "The Byzantine Background of the Moravian Mission," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, XIX (1965), pp. 1 ff. The attempts, on the other hand, of Symeon of Bulgaria (died 927) and of later Balkan rulers to set up a Slavonic-Greek Empire of the East, which could have been compared to the Frankish-Roman Empire of the West, were not suc-

In contrast to the Carolingian Empire, that of the Ottonians really was a return to a no longer extant Empire, to the Carolingian Empire itself. But this is not to say that the ideology of *internal* renewal did not play a large role in the once more renewed Empire; quite on the contrary, as could be proved by many Ottonian sources.<sup>87</sup>

Again it was the relatively newly converted Barbarians who renewed the Western Empire: the Saxons. The so-called Holy Roman Empire of the Saxon or Ottonian dynasty completed the interaction between Barbarian pressure and imperial renewal.

The Church reform of the Hildebrandian age grew out of the imperial renewal of the Ottonians and early Salians and finally clashed with it, because the reformers could no longer close their eyes to the fact that the hierarchical structure of the Church was being absorbed by the theocratic and feudal order of sacred rulership, and especially by the hegemonic function of the Western Empire. The Church itself was so much involved in this order that for the first time in Christian history more than personal or monastic reform, indeed a structural reform of the Church as a whole had to be envisaged. The battle cry of this new reform was *Libertas Ecclesiae*.<sup>88</sup>

The idea of *Libertas Ecclesiae*, though not alien to Christian renewal ideology since earliest times, became the key idea of Church reform in the age of Gregory VII. Yet it is very important to be aware of the fact that this idea of freedom was long conceived in an essentially hierarchical sense, that is to say, the sacred order was defended against political, especially imperial, power. Freedom of the Christian person was long re-

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cessful. See G. Ostrogorsky, "Die Krönung Symeons von Bulgarien durch den Patriarchen Nikolaos Mystikos," *Actes du IV<sup>e</sup> Congrès International des Etudes Byzantines (Bulletin de l'Institut Archéologique Bulgaré)*, IX, 1935), 275 ff.; F. Dölger, "Bulgarisches Zartum und byzantinisches Kaisertum," *Byzanz*, pp. 140 ff.

<sup>87</sup> Especially for the reign of Otto III; see P. E. Schramm, *Kaiser, Rom und Renovatio*, I (*Studien der Bibliothek Warburg*, XVII, Leipzig, 1929), 116 ff.

<sup>88</sup> See G. Tellenbach, *Church, State and Christian Society at the Time of the Investiture Contest*, Oxford, 1959.

## RENEWAL OF RELIGIOUS STRUCTURES

garded from this point of view alone, that is to say the essential spiritual liberty of the human person seemed to be sufficiently guaranteed by the freedom of the meta-political hierarchical system, regardless of the political, social, and economic situation of the individual within this system. Serfdom, for instance, was accepted by the Church on principle, though manumission was considered a meritorious work of supererogation. Only slowly did the Church develop a theory of individual freedom based on human dignity. Nevertheless, the influence of Christian ideals in the overcoming of servility was not negligible. While the Barbarians had transformed Christian society of antiquity first through external pressure, then through internal renewal, the dependent and poor transformed Christian society of the Middle Ages and of modern times both through intrinsic, that is to say religious, reform and through extrinsic, that is to say socio-economic, pressure. This latter development is still far from complete even today. Its medieval phase, in which the rise of free city life played a considerable, if not the predominant, role, is my second main theme.

## URBAN COMMUNES AND FREEDOM\*

I shall discuss first the influence of Christian ideas on the rise of personal liberty in the late Middle Ages, especially in the cities, and then the impact of socio-economic changes on this same phenomenon of personal liberty.

The attitude of the Church to free associations and institutions in the new cities of the Middle Ages and to the concomitant emergence of the liberty of formerly dependent persons remained ambivalent for several centuries. Many are the documents and historical accounts according to which bishops and other ecclesiastical authorities condemned the *coniurationes* and

\* I am grateful to Mr. Anthony J. Gagliano, former research assistant at the Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies of the University of California at Los Angeles, for valuable help in collecting sources and literature for Part II of this paper.

communes of citizens as rebellion against the established order.<sup>39</sup> But this, as is well known, is only one side of the whole picture. For, ever since the Church reform movement of the eleventh century, there were instances in which the strivings for a purer and freer Church ally themselves with pressure against the feudal system; and this happened in spite of the fact that the great movement towards religious and social renewal also brought to the surface rebellious trends of doubtful value as well as novel deviations from the faith and discipline of the Church.<sup>40</sup>

Is it possible to ascertain the nature of the relationship between the old theological and anthropological concepts of reform, which are scriptural and patristic in origin, and the new categories of socio-economic change, which appeared clearly at least from the eleventh century onward? For instance, is there a link between the monastic idea of community and its ideal exemplar, so often praised in monastic documents, the common life of the apostles on the one hand, and the origins of communes on the other? Certain remarkable parallelisms between the two phenomena exist. On the one hand, we have the revival and expansion of the community ideal among the clergy, among the canons regular, and among the new types of monastic

<sup>39</sup> See, for instance, Alpert of Metz, *De diversitate temporum*, II, 20 (concerning Tiel), *Monum. Germ. Hist., Script.*, IV, pp. 718 f.; Lambert of Hersfeld, *Annales*, to 1074 (concerning Cologne), *Script. Rer. Germ.* (1894), pp. 186 ff.; *Gesta Episcoporum Cameracensium, Continuatio, Monum. Germ. Hist., Script.*, VII, pp. 498 f.; Gislebertus, *Chronicon Hanoniense* (concerning Valenciennes), *Script. Rer. Germ.* (1869), pp. 78 f.; *Gesta Pontificum Cenomannensium, Recueil des historiens des Gaules et de la France*, XII, pp. 540 f. (see R. Latouche, "La commune du Mans," *Mélanges L. Halphen*, Paris, 1951, pp. 377 ff.); Hugh of Poitiers, *Historia Vizelaciensis Monasterii*, III, Migne, *Patrol. Lat.*, CXCIV, pp. 1609 ff. (see F. Bourquelot, "Observations sur l'établissement de la commune de Vézelay," *Bibliothèque de l'Ecole des Chartes*, ser. III, CXI [1852], 447 ff.); Guibert of Nogent, *De vita sua*, III, 7, (Paris, 1907) pp. 155 ff.; Otto of Freising, *Gesta Friderici Imperatoris*, II, 13 (concerning Milan), *Script. Rer. Germ.* (1912), p. 116.

<sup>40</sup> For the connections between Church reform and heresy in the eleventh and early twelfth centuries, see H. Grundmann, *Ketzergeschichte des Mittelalters, Die Kirche in ihrer Geschichte*, II, Göttingen, 1963, and J. Russell, *Religious Dissent*, Berkeley, 1965, with ample bibliography.

orders such as the Cistercians with their *Carta Caritatis*. At the same time, we can observe that ideas such as *amicitia*, *caritas*, *coniuratio*, and *communia* constituted the inspiration and core of not a few urban and also rural associations.

One of the most significant concepts in the history of the medieval cities is that of community. The principal Latin terms used in the sources are *communio*, *commune*, and *communia*. It has been convincingly demonstrated by Roger Grand that the term *communia*, though soon to be used as a noun of feminine gender in the singular, was originally an adjective in the neuter plural, meaning things in common.<sup>41</sup> In this sense the word had indeed often been used in antiquity, for instance by Seneca,<sup>42</sup> and above all in the Vulgate version of the Acts of the Apostles: "Multitudinis autem credentium erat cor unum et anima una: nec quisquam eorum quae possidebat aliquid suum esse dicebat, sed erant illis omnia communia."<sup>43</sup> This latter passage had since early Christian times served as a model text for monastic and, since St. Augustine, also for clerical communities.<sup>44</sup> In the eleventh- and twelfth-century Church reform it acted as an inspiration for the resumption of the common life of a celibatarian, non-simoniac clergy. The question arises whether the religious concept of *communia* could have influenced the rise of urban and rural communes during the eleventh and early twelfth centuries.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>41</sup> "De l'étymologie et de l'acceptation première du mot *communia* = commune, au moyen âge," *Revue historique de droit français et étranger*, ser. IV, XXVI (1948), 144 ff.

<sup>42</sup> *De beneficiis*, 7, 12, 2.

<sup>43</sup> Acts 4, 32; see also Acts 2, 44.

<sup>44</sup> See my article "Erneuerung," *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, VI (1966), 267; G. Miccoli, "Ecclesiae primitivae forma," *Miccoli, Chiesa Gregoriana*, Florence, 1966, pp. 225 ff.

<sup>45</sup> For the origins of French, Flemish, German, and Italian communes in general see R. Grand, "La genèse du mouvement communal en France," *Rev. hist. de droit franç. et étranger*, ser. IV, XXI (1942), 151 ff.; C. Petit-Dutailly, "Les communes françaises au XII<sup>e</sup> siècle," *ibid.*, ser. IV, XXII f. (1944), 115 ff. and 8 ff.; F. L. Ganshof, "Le droit urbain en Flandre au début de la première phase de son histoire," *Tijdschrift voor Rechtsgeschiedenis*, XIX (1951), 387 ff.; *idem*, "Einwohnergenossenschaft und Graf in den flandrischen Städten während des 12. Jahrhunderts," *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte*,

Most historians have rightly stated that immediate and exclusive influence cannot be assumed. We must above all consider that full-fledged community of all possessions, as practiced perhaps at Jerusalem by Christians of the apostolic age, proved difficult enough of adoption, and was never generally successful, even among the non-monastic clergy; it was never on the program of medieval communes.

And yet, it would be a mistake to neglect the powerful religious ideal of the common life as one of the causes which must have coalesced in the emergence of the communes.<sup>46</sup> Fraternal association and an equal amount of freedom within the community were indeed features of the ideal Christian life, which though overshadowed at times by the equally valid hierarchical ideal, had never been lost and were always latently available for the use also of secular society.

The Gregorian Church reform, though stressing the hierarchical elements of the Church *in foro interno*, at the same time released and intermittently supported *in foro externo* associative trends, directed against the all too inclusive hierarchical elements which had brought about an all too exclusive prevalence of the lord-serf relationship.<sup>47</sup>

Those associative elements which had survived were by no means all of religious origin, and when so, not always of Christian origin. This is particularly clear in the case of the guilds, the rise of which accompanied that of the communes. Pirenne<sup>48</sup> and others have left little doubt as to the tremendous importance of the factors of economic, and especially mercantile opportunity and pressure in the rise of both guilds and communes. It is

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Germ. Abteil LXXIV (1957), 98 ff.; E. Ennen, *Frühgeschichte der europäischen Stadt*, Bonn, 1953; *idem*, "Das Städtewesen Nordwestdeutschlands von der fränkischen bis zur salischen Zeit," *Das erste Jahrtausend*, II, Düsseldorf, 1964, pp. 785 ff.; G. Fasoli, *Della "Civitas" al Comune*, Bologna, 1960-61.

<sup>46</sup> So also E. Delaruelle, "La vie commune des clercs et la spiritualité populaire au XI<sup>e</sup> siècle," *La vita comune del clero nei secoli XI e XII*, I, Milan, 1962, p. 169.

<sup>47</sup> The great work of O. Gierke, *Das deutsche Genossenschaftsrecht*, Berlin, 1868-1912, is still very valuable for information on all associative trends in the Middle Ages.

<sup>48</sup> See *Les villes du moyen âge*, Brussels, 1927.

also true that the strong religious orientation of so many guilds and related corporations is not altogether of Christian origin, but is rather a mixture of Germanic and Christian-Mediterranean elements. This applies, for instance, to the drinking ceremonies (*potationes, beuveries*) around which the guilds seem to have crystallized and which almost certainly are derived from Germanic cultic celebrations, though the secondary influence of the Christian eucharistic meal and agape should perhaps not be excluded. The same applies, perhaps even more clearly, to the solemn oaths which are so characteristic for all these associations from the earliest guilds in the eighth century to the communes of the eleventh and twelfth, and beyond.<sup>49</sup>

Variegated elements of the nature described are found in early charters and statutes of communes and guilds. I shall mention two examples.

One of the oldest communes north of the Alps of which we have documentary evidence is that of Aire-sur-la-Lys. The surviving charter is only of 1188, but refers back to earlier charters, the first of which must have dated from between 1096 and 1111. The commune is here called *Amicitia*, also *Amicitia communis*. Jurisdiction is in the hands of twelve elected judges. All members of the *Amicitia* had to swear to defend one another as if they were brothers.<sup>50</sup>

One of the oldest guild charters, likewise of Flanders, is that of the cloth makers of Valenciennes. We have only a fourteenth-

<sup>49</sup> For all this see the numerous important studies of E. Coornaert, for example: *Les corporations en France avant 1789*, Paris, 1941; "Des confréries carolingiennes aux gildes marchandes," *Mélanges d'histoire sociale*, II, Paris, 1942; "Les ghildes médiévaux," *Revue historique*, CXCIX (1948), 22 ff. See also G. LeBras, "Les confréries chrétiennes," *Rev. hist. de droit franç. et étranger*, ser. IV, XIX-XX (1940-41), 310 ff.; G. M. Monti, *Le confraternite medievali dell'alta e media Italia*, Venice, 1927; *idem*, *Le corporazioni nell'evo antico e nell'alto medio evo*, Bari, 1934. For the role of sworn association in the beginnings of the Swiss Confederation see the excellent introduction by H. G. Wirtz in part III, vol. I of the *Quellenwerk zur Geschichte der Schweizerischen Eidgenossenschaft*, Aarau, 1947.

<sup>50</sup> See G. Espinas, *Recueils des documents relatifs à l'histoire du droit municipal en France des origines à la Révolution*, Artois, I, Paris, 1934, pp. 20 ff.

century French translation of it, but the first part of the original charter must have been drafted around 1200 or earlier. It begins with a kind of foreword which centers around man's image and likeness to God, which is conceived as inseparable from fraternal love, for the latter leads to the love of God. The guild itself is designated as *caritet* (*caritas*); religious duties and the common drinking ceremony are prominently mentioned. All the regulations of the first and oldest part of the charter have the purpose of maintaining charity at least among the brethren and of correcting transgressions of it.<sup>51</sup>

The connection between the ideals of the Christian fraternal spirit and urban communal life is nowhere as well documented as in the history of the Milanese Pataria movement of the eleventh century. The Pataria was a religiously motivated revolution against the incontinent and simoniac clergy of Milan. It is rather characteristic of the movement that its clerical leaders lived the so-called canonical life in common at a church which was called the *canonica*. These same leaders had sworn an oath to uphold their cause and soon the group of citizens who followed them joined in this oath. Again we find the oath of mutual loyalty and assistance which, as is well known, is one of the most important, if not the most important, mark of nascent urban communes all over medieval Europe. In Milan we can see very clearly how the city commune gradually developed out of the struggles around the Pataria, which were closely linked to the Investiture contest between the Holy Roman Empire and the Papacy, and at the same time to the emancipation of the burghers from the ecclesiastical and secular feudal lords. It is in the midst of these complex struggles that we hear repeatedly of more or less turbulent popular assemblies, of the *commune*, and of the *res publica* of Milan.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>51</sup> See H. Caffiaux, "Mémoire sur la charte de la Frairie de la Halle Basse de Valenciennes," *Mémoires de la Société Nationale des Antiquaires de France*, ser. IV, VIII (1877), 1 ff., edition 25 ff. For Valenciennes see also the *Chronicon Hanoniense*, op. cit.

<sup>52</sup> The principal sources are: Arnulfus, *Gesta Archiepiscoporum Mediolanensis*, III, 13, 20, 25, IV, 10, *Monum. Germ. Hist., Script.*, VIII, 20, 23, 25, 28; Landulfus Senior, *Historia Mediolanensis*, III, 5 ff., 18 ff.;

Not even in the case of the Pataria movement is it possible to assume with any amount of certainty that the ideal exemplar of the Christian life in common, the apostolic community of Jerusalem, described in the Acts of the Apostles and revived at that time by quasi-monastic communities of clerics, *directly* influenced the formation of the urban commune. Yet there can, in my opinion, be little doubt that the renewal of common life among the clergy formed the spiritual climate in which the associative element among laymen also could assert itself beside the hierarchical one.

Similar observations can be made not only for urban but also for rural communes of the eleventh and twelfth centuries.<sup>53</sup> Monastic and episcopal reform, the extension of parish organization, and peace unions were the leading factors.

Duby has shown how by 1100 in the diocese of Mâcon in Burgundy the parish had become a confraternity, a community of peasants. Not infrequently such village communities were given freedom by the ecclesiastical or secular feudal lord.<sup>54</sup>

Büttner and Hoffmann have recently demonstrated how in eleventh- and twelfth-century France an important manifestation

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*ibid.* 76 ff., 86 ff.; Landulfus de S. Paulo, *Historia Mediolanensis* 18, 23, 30, 33; (New) Muratori, *Rer. Ital. Script.*, V, part III, 13, 15, 18 f., 20; Andreas of Strumi, *Vita S. Arialdi*, 7, *Monum. Germ. Hist., Script.*, XXX, part II, 1054. For the similar events in Florence and their connection with the reform of Vallombrosa see the *Vitae* of St. John Gualbertus (one of them by Andreas of Strumi), *Monum. Germ. Hist., Script.*, XXX, part II, 1076 ff. See C. Violante, *La Pataria milanese e la riforma ecclesiastica*, I Rome, 1955; G. Miccoli, "Per la storia della Pataria milanese," *Bullettino dell'Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo e Archivio Muratoriano*, LXX (1958), 43 ff.; *idem*, *Pietro Igneo*, Rome, 1960.

<sup>53</sup> For medieval rural communes in general see P. Dollinger, *L'Evolution des classes rurales en Bavière de l'époque carolingienne jusqu'au milieu du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Paris, 1949; F. Steinbach, "Stadtgemeinde und Landgemeinde," *Rheinische Vierteljahrsschriften*, XI (1948), 11 ff.; *Die Anfänge der Landgemeinde, Vorträge und Forschungen*, Konstanzer Arbeitskreis, VII f., Constance, 1964; G. Fasoli, "Castelli e Signorie rurali," *Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo*, XIII, Spoleto, 1966, pp. 531 ff., especially 561 ff.

<sup>54</sup> See *La société aux XI<sup>e</sup> et XII<sup>e</sup> siècles dans la région mâconnaise*, Paris, 1963, 285 ff.

of the religious reform movement, the peace unions and their *militiae*, were conceived of in terms of the *communia*, as the common affair of all the people. Since these *communiae* often included all male inhabitants of the region, they contributed to raising the status of serfs and could lead to the granting of franchise to rural communities such as certain abbatial *burgi* in Anjou and Poitou, and monastic *salvitates* in Southwestern and Southern France.<sup>55</sup>

The foregoing remarks concerning religious influences on the development of personal liberty in the late Middle Ages could probably be given a broader basis by further research. The influence of non-religious, socio-economic changes is so far much more evident and relatively easy to define. It can be reduced to two principal forms of pressure, one of a negative, the other of a positive nature: the first is the decreasing profitability of rural domanial economy of servile labor, and the second is the repercussion of city liberties far beyond the territory of the cities themselves.

In this connection I should like to remind you of the recent ingenious thesis of the Russian historian E. Schtajerman, according to which the decline of the ancient Roman Empire was largely caused by the progressive unrentability of a municipal socio-economic order based on slavery; while that system was more and more widely replaced by a network of vast *latifundia*, whose owners employed few slaves but many half-free *coloni*, these great landlords and their *coloni* tenants became less and less interested in the centralizing framework of the city-centered Empire and this prepared the way for the triumph of the Barbarians.<sup>56</sup>

In the medieval West this process was both continued and

<sup>55</sup> "Studien zum frühmittelalterlichen Städtewesen, vornehmlich im Loire- und Rhônegebiet," *Studien zu den Anfängen des europäischen Städtewesens*, Constance and Lindau, 1958, pp. 174 ff.; H. Hoffmann, *Gottesfriede und Treuga Dei, Schriften der Monum. Germ. Hist.*, XX, Stuttgart, 1964, pp. 104 ff., 132 f., 208 f., 248 f. See also Delaruelle, "Vie commune," *op. cit.*, pp. 169 f.

<sup>56</sup> *Die Krise der Sklavenhalterordnung im Westen des römischen Reiches*, Berlin, 1964.

reversed: the trend was towards further limitations of the servile condition and at the same time towards a new city civilization.

With regard to the first point: the opinion of Marc Bloch that by the early twelfth century the *servi*, *coloni*, and so forth of late ancient and early medieval times had almost disappeared as such in most parts of Western Europe, seems on the whole still to be the correct one; they had merged with the remnants of free peasants into one large group of dependent persons.<sup>57</sup> Their duties towards the lord, if not lighter, were defined less arbitrarily than before, and they were now rooted less in personal dependence than in the plots of land, parcelled out to the tenants from the disintegrating seigniorial domain. The basic reason for these changes was probably the lord's recognition that because of the destructive effect of the new Barbarian invasions of the ninth and tenth centuries as well as because of the increased number, growing energy, efficiency, and assertiveness of the rural population, they could no longer profitably manage their enormously large domains, except if they entrusted the greater part of them to the initiative of their tenants. This development, which was repeated in ever widening circles during the later phases of the Middle Ages, but which also experienced reverses,<sup>58</sup> certainly tended to increase the amount of rights and liberties, if not the amount of liberty, in the rural population, but would by itself hardly have led to their full personal freedom.

All the more important, therefore, was the additional impulse emanating from the cities, where a more comprehensive concept of liberty had been won, in part by revolutionary uprisings and in part by grants from the feudal lords in which the profit motive was far from absent. The feudal lords might reap profit from their cities, but they also willingly or not had to accept the principle, established since the eleventh century, that city

<sup>57</sup> See "Liberté et servitude personnelle au moyen âge, particulièrement en France," *Anuario de historia del derecho español*, X (1935); also Duby, *Société médiévale*, pp. 245 ff.

<sup>58</sup> See for England R. H. Hilton, "Freedom and Villeinage in England," *Past and Present*, XXXI (1965), 3 ff.; E. P. Cheyney, "The Disappearance of English Serfdom," *English Review*, XV (1900), 20 ff.

air makes free, and in addition had to make further concessions of liberties to the peasants in order to keep them on the land.

The cities were thus the greatest force in the gradual elimination of the last remainders of the servile condition of Antiquity and of the early Middle Ages. Yet the cities were soon faced with new problems arising from class contrasts within their own walls, problems which neither individual and corporative egoism nor the unmitigated action of social and economic pressures could solve. As to the old Christian ideology and practice of renewal, it did experience a great rejuvenation in its own through the mendicant movement, and especially through the Franciscan spirit, but nevertheless proved unable to cope fully with the new situation, to solve the new problems of urban civilization. Yet attempts to do so have persisted and still persist.

Often the old patristic terminology was literally applied to the new condition. Terms such as *emendare*, *corrigere*, *reformari et de bono in melius ampliari*, *reformare et ad statum debitum reducere* abound in city charters of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

The institutions of the late medieval *Reformatio Patriae* in Southern France<sup>59</sup> and of the *Corregidor* in Castille<sup>60</sup> ultimately go back to the same scriptural-patristic origins—not to speak of the famous *Reformatio* of the Emperor Sigismund and similar reform tracts of the late Middle Ages.<sup>61</sup> However, in the class struggles of the Central Italian cities of the thirteenth century the old terminology of reform and renewal enter the road which was to lead to their partial secularization in the service of political and socio-economic life.

So, for instance, as early as 1190 in Genoa *emendatores* brought about great changes in the consular government of the

<sup>59</sup> See, for instance, *Cartulaire et archives des communes de l'ancien diocèse et de l'arrondissement administratif de Carcassonne*, I, Paris, 1857, pp. 136 ff.; see F. Lot and R. Fawtier, *Histoire des institutions françaises du moyen âge*, II, Paris, 1958, pp. 157 f.

<sup>60</sup> See J.-M. Font y Rius, "Les villes dans l'Espagne du moyen âge," *Recueils de la Société Jean Bodin*, VI, *La ville*, I, Brussels, 1954, p. 270.

<sup>61</sup> See L. Graf zu Dohna, *Reformatio Sigismundi*, Göttingen, 1960.

city<sup>62</sup> or, to give another example, in 1251 the Podestà of Viterbo appointed eight sworn *emendatores* for the correction and emendation of the statutes of the commune.<sup>63</sup> In the Central and North Italian cities of that period reform was ultimately the privilege of the highest city authority, usually called *Consilium*. Most interestingly, almost any legislative action of its assemblies could come to be termed reform; in Bologna, Florence, Siena, Perugia, Piacenza, and in many other cities even the protocols of the sessions of the city council were called *Riformazioni*, *Riformagini*, and the like.<sup>64</sup>

Here then we encounter in its beginnings the modern secularized and institutionalized concept of reform. It failed to protect either the Italians of the thirteenth century and of later ages or other peoples from fierce civil and international wars. Nevertheless, there always remained and still remains the hope for genuine renewal, and we also find over and over again in late medieval and modern times inspiring and moving manifestations of an ideology which would recover the human and spiritual substance that is so easily lost in the mechanics of institutions. Such hope is beautifully expressed in a peace treaty between Florence and Siena of the year 1255; it cites a psalm verse which stresses friendship and love, the old inspirations of communal life; it defines the forces which alone can renew and perpetuate institutions: "A perpetual treaty, concluded by the tie of love in a society, lasts inviolate forever, and like the eagle it renews the ardour of sincere love, in the light of which friends are wont to dwell."<sup>65</sup>

<sup>62</sup> *Annales Ianuenses, Fonti per la Storia d'Italia*, Rome, 1901, p. 34, also p. 14.

<sup>63</sup> See *Cronache e Statuti della Città di Viterbo, Documenti di Storia Italiana, Regia Deputazione sugli studi di Storia Patria per le provincie di Toscana dell'Umbria e delle Marche*, V, Florence, 1872, pp. 452 f., no. 4, and 540, no. 182.

<sup>64</sup> Many of these are still preserved under such titles in the city archives. For Siena and Florence see R. Davidsohn, *Geschichte von Florenz*, II, 1, Berlin, 1908, pp. 407 f., n. 1, and II, 2, p. 440, n. 1.

<sup>65</sup> *Documenti dell'antica costituzione del Comune di Firenze, Documenti di Storia Italiana, Deputazione di Storia Patria per la Toscana*, Florence, 1952, appendix, I, pp. 154 f., no. 50; see Psalm 102, 5.

Today, as then, the perilous contrast between such venerable theological-anthropological traditions of renewal on the one hand, and socio-economic pressures and failures on the other, urgently demands to be bridged and overcome.

### THE DIALECTIC OF PERSONAL AND INSTITUTIONAL REFORM

This brings me to my brief concluding remarks on the dialectic of personal and institutional reform in the late Middle Ages and in the modern age, which seems to me to affect the theology of the renewal of the Church even today.

I have already alluded to the fact that the necessity of reform of the Church as a whole became an acute problem for the first time in the Hildebrandian age. In the second half of the eleventh century Gregory VII and other Church reformers had found that personal and monastic reform were no longer enough if the freedom of the spirit in the Church was to be saved from being absorbed by an order of sacred rulership which was not even political, but only quasi-political, which was rather a combination of theocratic and feudal relationships. To maintain its own identity, the Church as an institution had to reform itself from top to bottom as a meta-political order of Christianity.

This meta-political ecclesiastical order flourished from Gregory VII to Boniface VIII's catastrophe in 1303. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries it saw itself confronted by the new task of integrating a new consciousness of *ratio* and a new awareness of *bios*, that is to say, a new confidence in logical thinking and a new outburst of sheer natural vitality.

At the same time a more authentically political conception of human relations grew up, as a reaction not only against the quasi-political order of the earlier Middle Ages, but also against the meta-political order of the Church. The Church of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries was able to integrate *ratio*, but it did not succeed so well with *bios* and with the new *polis*,

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one of whose aspects was the new idea of personal freedom which I discussed earlier. Lack of success in these respects was to become more marked since the age of the Italian Renaissance and became pernicious since the ephemeral, but not easily forgotten triumph of Baroque absolutism in State and Church.

Both the ecclesiastical *meta-polis* and the new *polis* of the later Middle Ages and early modern times (thirteenth to nineteenth centuries), in opposing each other, became more and more rigid and arid, so far as their institutional characters were concerned. The State tried to use the spirit of the Church for its own ends or rejected it altogether. The Church, on the other hand, was slow to take into consideration those legitimate political, social, and economic aspirations which involved great changes in the position of the ecclesiastical *meta-polis* in the world.

It is true that the late medieval and early modern period of Christian history, too, was far from lacking that element of personal renewal which has at all times been at the center of Christian reform. Among many great names one needs only to recall a few: St. Francis of Assisi, St. Ignatius Loyola, San Filippo Neri, the Curé d'Ars, and in Protestant Christianity Kierkegaard, among the Orthodox the great Starets' of Russia. Yet again, personal renewal proved not to be quite enough.

This was largely due to the fact that meanwhile the politico-socio-economic order had assumed those truly colossal forms for which the scriptural terms of Leviathan and Behemoth, which three hundred years ago Hobbes had applied to absolute government and to its revolutionary counterpart, seem to be not inappropriate. Revolutionary and totalitarian movements and attitudes did indeed increasingly invade and engulf every aspect of society, every conscious and unconscious fiber of the human being. The new *polis*, which is really total society rather than the *polis* of the old style, required a new and total reaction from the Church, demanded the taking of a new stand which this time must include personal and institutional renewal at one and the same time.

Again freedom of spirit had to be vindicated, this time against

a societism which became more and more totalitarian in character; and the pronouncements of the Popes from Pius IX to Pius XII served this vindication well. Again a new *ratio* and a new *bios* had to be integrated in the teaching and the life of the Church, and again the integration of the biological sphere lagged behind that of the rational sphere; but this time it was even more important than in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries that those deep problems of human life which in the practical order had not yet been truly solved by the Church be faced with absolute honesty and without evasion.

Pope John XXIII recognized, faced, and broached these problems in the practical order and called the Second Vatican Council for cooperation in their solution.

It is today a truism to state that among the great problems which confront the Church some of the greatest lie not within the Church herself, but rather in the field of right relations between the Church and the world. These problems might perhaps be subsumed under four great concerns which belong to natural life, but nevertheless have their origin and end in supranatural life: freedom, justice, peace, and love. It was perhaps providential that in the last two hundred years these four ideas had found new practical applications alongside of, and in part in opposition to, some of the more evident public positions of the Church, which was not immediately ready to consider to what extent these new forms of natural life, these new external pressures, could and should be integrated in its own life.

Today there seems to be little doubt that we are on the verge of a far-reaching Christian integration of the natural *bios*, comparable to the twelfth and thirteenth century integration of *ratio*. This seems to be the case in spite of a Christian or even anti-Christian origin of much that is contained in the new challenge. The ideas of freedom, justice, peace, and love had indeed long been Christian ideas, but their new realizations in our time were not primarily initiated on specifically Christian grounds. These new realizations can hardly be separated from the libertarianism of the American and French Revolutions, from Marx's radical reassessment of social justice, from Gandhi's

uncompromising pacifism, and from the re-evaluation of sexuality by Freud. The situation of Christians today might be compared, *mutatis mutandis*, to that of the great scholastics of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, who encountered the tremendous intellectual challenges of a pre-Christian Aristotle and of an extra-Christian Averroes. Yet, the great challenges of today must be met not only in the realm of thought, but also and even more so in the whole arena of life. John XXIII recognized this and pointed the way.

While in the sphere of social justice he followed in the tracks of Leo XIII and Pius XI (*Mater et Magistra*), and was himself followed by Paul VI (*Populorum Progressio*), John XXIII went beyond most precedents in his uncompromising endorsement of peace and non-violence (*Pacem in Terris*). Furthermore, Pope John XXIII, by the truly ecumenical spirit of his call to the Council, and Pope Paul VI, by the brotherly style of his apostolic journeys to the non-Catholic Christian East and to Hindu India, revitalized the most important of all freedoms, the freedom of conscience, in a new spirit of love. Assertion of that freedom is not unrelated to that desacralization and secularization of culture which is probably not only unavoidable, but even beneficial to Christianity, and which need not be identical with the perpetuation of closed secularist societies hostile to Christianity. It is not so much the hostile attitude of the latter, it is rather the neutrality, the religious indifference, of our world culture which may lead to that new diaspora situation of which Karl Rahner and Thomas Merton have spoken, a situation which is not an unnatural habitat for Christians and which opens up new possibilities of mission and conversion and love.

As to that other love: *Eros* rather than *Caritas*, which at all times was the cause of so much human greatness and misery, here, too, we may stand at a new beginning. Perhaps the Church will be led to a more profound appreciation of the consuming fire that can lift human Eros to the threshold of the divine. Perhaps the heroic efforts towards a reconciliation between Eros and Caritas, begun by the Christian Platonists of the twelfth

century and of the Renaissance, are in need of a more successful completion.

Christ has said: "Seek ye therefore first the Kingdom of God and *his* justice and all these things shall be added unto you." Personal renewal then will always be the core of the Christian religion. That those "added things" are often brought about by the instrumentality of external pressures, is, it would seem, the normal course of events. How one responds to the opportunities thus given, that is the great question. Is it to be by using an eschatological attitude—which has so often inspired personal and collective renewal in the past—as an excuse for leaving the status quo untouched? Or is it to be by ransoming the time at our disposal, so that we may be known by our fruits? The Church in its history has, I believe, already given her answer to the question.

## 20.

# THE CHURCH AND THE DEVELOPING NATIONS: SOME QUESTIONS FOR THE THEOLOGIANS

FRANÇOIS HOUTART

THE information we have at our disposal concerning the problems of development of the countries of the Third World, as well as the recent encyclical *Populorum Progressio*, allow us to dispense with an introductory explanation of the whole state of the question. After an introduction which will lead me to set foot in theological territory, I wish to deal with the significance for humanity of the development of the Third World and the meaning of the Church's presence there.

## THE CHURCH AS SIGN

In fact, it is a theological definition that this paper takes as its point of departure, a theological definition whose sociological implications we will try to deduce. In its very first paragraph, the constitution *Lumen gentium* declares that the Church is "by her relationship with Christ, a kind of sacrament or sign of intimate union with God, and of the unity of all mankind." Several authoritative commentators of this text place particular stress on its importance. Fr. Schillebeeckx writes: "The Church is a

sign, visible to the whole world, in which is revealed the mystery of the concrete life of this world.”<sup>1</sup>

This sign is quite concrete. Its function, according to the same author, is to “bring men together in a community of brothers founded on their union with God in his envoy, Christ Jesus.”<sup>2</sup> But if the Church is to merit this title of “sacrament of the world,”<sup>3</sup> it will have to translate itself into the life of men, in the very heart of the reality we live today. And yet another aspect of the Church’s reality as sign ought to be insisted upon, in a sort of constant dialectic, and that is its eschatological character. “The Church,” writes J. B. Metz, “has a hope and bears witness to a hope, but the object of this hope is not the Church itself. It is a hope in the kingdom of God as the future of the world.”<sup>4</sup>

If we wish to develop somewhat the meaning of the word “sign” in sociology, we must address our inquiry to the sociology of communication. Every communication always requires three elements: the transmitter, the receiver, and the sign which serves as bearer of the communication. The sign is a sensible manifestation of a reality which can only be grasped indirectly. When we speak of “manifestation,” we mean that the receiver should perceive what the transmitter wishes to transmit to him. If the sign is incomprehensible, because the receiver does not understand the language of the transmitter, for example, there is no manifestation. But the manifestation can be expressed in a variety of ways—words, gestures, symbols. And so there is verbal and non-verbal communication. According to the reality to be grasped, communication can be of various kinds. It may be concerned with revelation of something that exists, and then the sign expresses or symbolizes this reality. This is the case when we give someone information. The kerygma fulfills this function in the Church. But the reality may be located in the

<sup>1</sup> “Foi chrétienne et attente terrestre,” *L’Eglise dans le monde de ce temps*, Toulouse, 1967, p. 145.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 137.

<sup>4</sup> “L’Eglise et le monde,” *Théologie d’aujourd’hui et de demain*, Paris, 1967, p. 151.

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future; then the sign is a notification of what is going to come, and it is in this sense that we are using the word "sign" right now. Two examples will suffice: the flashing lights of a plane about to land, and the invitation that precedes the prayers in the liturgy.

At any rate, in every type of communication an area of common understanding is necessary between the transmitter and the receiver. The sign is always the result of a code—one codes into words, actions, or symbols what one wishes to communicate—and this code must be common. This is true for intentional communication, the act by which a message is directed, as well as for nonintentional communication, which is broadcast by the individual or collective personality of the transmitter.

The application of these reflections to the Church reveals at once complexity and richness. One part of the sign-dimension of the reality of the Church seems to escape human science. Only faith shows us God as the transmitter, who uses the Church as a sign (at once word, gesture, and symbol). But in many of its other aspects, the Church as sign can be the object of reflection and research by the human sciences. That the Church is itself the bearer of the divine communication, we grasp only by faith. But the way it communicates and is perceived by men can be the object of our analyses.

Indeed, not only does the Church *use* communication, on account of the very fact that it is an institution and so a social being, but it also *is a sign*, the theologians tell us. To expand a bit, we may say that it is a sign not only because it speaks in intentional communication, not only because it acts and creates, but also because it is. But if it is a sign, it ought to be expressed in a way perceptible to men of our time, that is, with reference to their values, their attitudes, their behavior: in a word, their culture and their situation in the world. And this has a bearing on the thought, the action, and the very being of the Church in its existential reality. In other words, it ought to be significant for mankind.

Undoubtedly, the bearing of the sign will be determined by a theological clarification; but the conditions of its efficacy may

be indicated by the psychologist or the sociologist. It is here that the difference in method between these disciplines appears, but also their complementary roles in the resolution of the problems that interest us. If the theologian starts from a datum which he must express and constantly renew throughout history and in diverse cultures, the specialist in the human sciences can blaze a trail for him in the complexity of social reality, help him "read the signs of the times," and show him the probable consequences of the alternatives he suggests. Without at least implicit recourse to the human sciences, the theologian of today runs the risk, in a part of his task, of becoming an ideologue of dead forms, that is, of an insignificant sign.

But there are still a few remarks of a sociological kind to make before we apply these concepts in the form of questions towards analyzing the problems of the development of the Third World and the significance of the Church in relation to it. The first remark concerns the Church itself. The Church was defined by the Council as the "People of God," and this in a privileged way; all the same, sociologically speaking, it is manifest by its institution. In other words, at least in its present situation, what the ecclesial institution manifests and expresses in its sociological reality is very important for the perception of the Church as a sign.

This leads us to another consideration. A sort of occupational prejudice leads us very often in the Church to identify intention with reality. But there can be an enormous gap between the two. Someone can have the intention to transmit such and such a message, but in fact, on account of different circumstances, the sign he gives is quite different. In the course of this talk I will give a certain number of examples, sometimes painful or implying a severe judgment. Never will I be casting doubt on the intentions of the persons involved; but I will try to show the enormous gulf between the intention and the sign effectively given. A certain Latin American archbishop, who had built his episcopal palace on a hill overlooking the city and who used a late-model American car, certainly wished to show the importance of the Church in the life of the city. He was himself

no lover of luxury. But if the respectful attitude of the crowds he encountered could deceive him, the sign as perceived by the popular leaders and the university students was far different!

Finally, it would be well to recall the social context of the modern society in which the signs are given. The introduction to *Gaudium et spes* describes its characteristics. We are living in a pluralistic, changing world, a difficult situation. Today's intercommunication obliges us to think constantly in universal terms. Any sign, given in a precise context, can be perceived quite differently when it is transmitted by Eurovision or Mondi-vision. We will have to get used to leaving our particularities behind, and reacting in a "catholic" way. But there is more. Pluralism is a universal reality today. The dynamic elements of society, even in the most apparently traditional civilizations, are already reacting like the same elements elsewhere. The first question asked by the young students of a Catholic college in Kerala, after a talk on "The Church and the World," at the time of the last electoral campaign, was "What do you think about the intervention of bishops in politics?"

The fact that our civilization is changing rapidly, to say nothing of the pace of change in the developing countries does not make things simpler. We must also bear in mind that language is being transformed, that symbols are evolving and signs changing. When a great number of religious congregations, especially for women, were founded in Europe to remedy some of the great social evils of their time—hospital orders at the end of the seventeenth century, teaching congregations in the nineteenth—it was evident to everybody that this was a sign of charity. But now, in the same Europe, with the help of socialization, first instruction and then health have passed from the domain of charity to that of social legislation (compulsory schooling and social security), and it is evident that the sign has changed. This takes nothing away from the devotion of the individual religious, but it does change their collective witness. At best, it will be considered a service of the Catholic group which, if it seems valuable to society, will be considered legitimate; at worst, it will appear as a power, allowing the Church

—even if it disavows any such intention—to exercise political pressure. The theologians who are called to the rescue can perhaps supply the support of ideological crutches, and these prop up for a time the morale of those engaged in these areas of action and lend legitimacy to the appeals to Catholic conscience to provide their maintenance. But, at least when the problem is placed in its total context, their contribution is not very positive.

The complexity of situations might also threaten to make us take the ambivalence of the signs as an excuse to do nothing. It is true that the pluralism of ideologies, like that of cultures, as well as their instability, pose very complex problems for a theology of the sign. It must be shown that in the final analysis every sign is ambivalent, and that by the effort of seeking a pure signification we succeed in becoming insignificant. Is it not fidelity to love, such as Christ taught and signified, that will show us the way to follow? We must choose the side of the oppressed, at the risk of a certain failure of appreciation, rather than that of the oppressor, for the sake of safeguarding certain privileges. *Populorum Progressio* has shown us the way.

This is why two series of questions now have to be raised: what is the cultural universe in which we ought to give and be a sign; and what is the sign really given by the Church in the Third World?

## THE MEANING OF DEVELOPMENT IN THE THIRD WORLD

It is only by venturing to use an advanced level of abstraction that we can speak of the "Third World." What would our reaction be to a way of considering the developed world that included together without distinguishing them, Canada, Germany, Japan, France, the United States, and Monaco? We should also note in passing that the term "Third World" itself is opposed by a constantly increasing number of Africans, Asians, and

Latin Americans. Nevertheless, for the sake of convenience we will continue to use it.

*Development, a New Situation in Continuity with the Past*

Paradoxical as it may seem, development is at once a "sign of the times" and a reality as old as the world. In fact, it might be defined as the progress of mankind in the utilization of the universe. But while it went on at a very slow pace for millennia, this movement has progressively speeded up in the course of recent centuries, and particularly during the last fifty years, so that today humanity has entered an era in which change has become a normal situation.

The progressive knowledge of nature has led to the discovery of laws, and this has enabled man not only to explain its elementary principles but also to use them. This reversal in the order of things is at the origin of what we call the social and cultural mutation of humanity. As the introduction of *Gaudium et spes* explained it, all the data of the physical world, the organization of social life, man's manner of thinking and acting have been and continue to be upset on account of the more and more rapid application of scientific discoveries to all areas of human life. This fundamental fact of the progressive mastery of man over creation, placing him in a new relation with nature, his own nature included, makes us say that development is a new fact.

Nevertheless, that is where the drama lies: only one part of mankind has staked a claim to this new relation between man and creation, and their work is having repercussions throughout the whole. I am thinking not only of the demographic expansion of the underdeveloped areas, but also of their economic dependence, and the extraordinary revolution in communications.

The imbalances and the delays in this advance of mankind are bitterly resented, undoubtedly on account of the cost in human lives that results from them, but above all because the consciousness of these imbalances is growing among the masses who live on the border of development. The solution to these great prob-

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lems appears more and more clearly the chief collective goal of humanity. The encyclical *Populorum Progressio* calls it to mind by inviting the peoples to unite their efforts in a movement of universal solidarity. But it also emphasizes how enormous are the obstacles which spring from the delay in organizing and planning social facts, from the gap between agricultural and industrial economies, from the armaments race and continual war, from the effects of colonial domination, and from the refusal of socio-economic reforms in the developing countries.

All this is linked to the great challenge of modern man, a challenge which strikes its roots deep into the history of scientific discovery, and which today has repercussions in the domain of space and that of physical and psychological life. The resolution of these questions is much more than a response to humanitarian sentiments or compassion. It is a matter of encountering modern man in the very work of his advancement, today experienced as a real need of the species, a collective imperative. The acceleration of the development of the world during recent decades, and its uneven character, entail new conditions for today's humanity and form the new context in which the Church, on account of its mission, must appear as a sign.

## DEVELOPMENT AS A SITUATION OF HUMANITY

Only recently has a value been attributed to development in the world. It really involves an essentially relative notion which is only perceived by the comparison of different situations. Now today, such a comparison is possible both in time and in space. This is what is new. Man in the present locates himself in relation to the past but, and perhaps above all, in terms of the future. Consequently, history does not appear to him any longer as a cyclical movement, but as a constant progression whose steps he tries to foresee.

Thanks to the spread of media of transportation and communication, which allow the rapid exchange both of things and of ideas, the life of humanity has planetary dimensions. If this phenomenon makes him see the unity of the human race across

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cultural differences, it will also inevitably result in his taking stock of the gaps in development which divide the world of today. Up to now the peoples of the underdeveloped countries have suffered physically and morally the effects of these imbalances. But the situation is worse yet when they discover their profound causes. We need not be surprised to see the growth of a feeling of profound injustice. Is it possible for anyone not to understand that development is considered an index of the advancement of man? Does it not give him, if not his final fulfillment, at least his true orientation?

We can see, then, why action towards development is quite a different thing from a work of charity or of assistance. To consider it as such would be to misunderstand the fundamental right of persons and of peoples and to introduce a helper-helped relationship into a pseudo-development, which could only reinforce the awareness of a social injustice. This would be to begin again, only this time on a worldwide scale, the terrible experience which accompanied the beginnings of industrialization, whose aftereffects weigh heavily on the world. We must conclude, then, that the development of the whole of humanity is much more than a purely economic or even political question. It has become today a major question, the sign par excellence of the unity of mankind. The current problems constitute the crucial step in humanity's approach to a new situation. It would be dangerous to mistake the profound meaning of events which can always be easily attributed to particular causes. However we try to account for them, there is one basic meaning in the political instability of the African countries, the radicalism of China, guerrilla activity in Latin America, the efforts of international organizations for multilateral aid, or the extraordinary resistance of a small Asiatic people to a technological power a thousand times greater than their own.

## DEVELOPMENT AS CULTURAL AND SOCIAL MUTATION

If development has become a phenomenon universally recognized as well as a goal universally sought, this is because the

value accorded to the progress of humanity tends to extend itself to humanity as a whole. One indication that this is a case of true mutation is found, according to André Dumas, in contemporary ideologies. Deprived of the myths that sustained primitive society, and also deprived of the cosmological vision that classical society invented to replace them, today's societies seek a total image that is not formed by "ideals that look down on existing social forces from the height of their own perfection," but which presents itself as "the recognition of forces already at work in history, moving towards an end which will free history of its ambiguity by showing man the mystery of which it is the unconscious deposit."<sup>5</sup>

These ideologies are born of the desire to have the masses participate in the creation of their own future. To the extent that religion remains attached to mythical conceptions of the vision of the world, it will appear not only deprived of values but as an obstacle to development. The search for God has not disappeared from the world, and secularization does not mean irreligion. Yet if secularization is in a sense a liberation for faith, it is important to show how the "project" of development and the action of God come together today.

And this is valuable not only for the technological societies. The same questions are consciously raised among the intellectual and social elites of the younger nations, and more or less consciously among the masses—and the "more or less" is rapidly disappearing.

Max Weber had already shown the profound alteration that occurs when a society changes from what he called a "natural society" into a "cultural society." Each is characterized by a vision of the world; the first sees the world as a finished reality to be contemplated, while the second sees it as a reality in a state of becoming "which is perfected indefinitely by the work of men."<sup>6</sup> The change from one type to the other really ought to

<sup>5</sup> "La Fonction idéologique," *L'Individu et le groupe (Eglise et Société)*, vol. IV), Paris, 1966.

<sup>6</sup> Fabio Comparato, "Le Tiers-Monde: Données essentielles du sous-développement," *Le Tiers-Monde, l'Occident et l'Eglise*, Paris, 1967, p. 77.

be expressed in terms of cultural and social mutation; and this is the universal process we are living today.

### *The Urgency of the Problem*

The development of humanity is not only characterized by a very rapid rhythm of social and cultural changes. It is also characterized by the extent of the gaps in development and the urgency of finding solutions; the longer the delay, the more difficult it will be to find solutions, and the more we will be forced to radical choices as the only way out.

Perhaps there is nothing very new in such a statement, and *Populorum Progressio* has given a full account of it. But in practice it raises dramatic questions for the Christian and the human conscience. We are going to find ourselves more and more faced with conflicts of values, which very frequently prevent Christians from acting.

Let us be concrete. We uphold the inalienable value of human life and we now know better than we did some years ago the theoretical solutions to the problems of famine and of underdevelopment. But in practice, in India, demographic expansion is inexorably creating situations of an intolerable inhumanity. We find ourselves in a conflict of values. What are we to tell Christian doctors and nurses, who no longer dare even to discuss this question? Are we to continue to create medical colleges for the training of doctors who are opposed to birth control programs? Or are we to approve of the minister of health who offers a transistor radio to every man who will have himself sterilized?

The alteration of social structures is a requirement for the development of Latin America. There it is an unavoidable social, economic, and cultural fact. This great passage of humanity out of one situation of its existence and into another cannot come about without a break with the social structure of the past. Europe proved this with the English, French, and Russian revolutions. China, Cuba, and Iran are showing it in their own

way today. In Latin America, most of the regimes are trying to maintain the existing structures by means of rearrangements. How can we come to transform such a situation when international agreement threatens to freeze it solid, since the equilibrium between the socialist world and the "free" world requires the suppression of every subversive movement, even national ones. Are we, with Camilo Torres, to call the people to armed revolt? Or are we to appeal for the union of hearts and charity? In other words, are we to accept violence or are we to accept the status quo?

These are two examples chosen from a great many. Doubtless the problems are still more complex than they appear at first sight, since they are coupled with ideologies, with groups, with personalities. But what is the value of a religion that tells us nothing about these questions? A religion that retires to Olympus and lets men flounder in their problems; or worse yet, a religion that approves of its members' work in acceptance of ambiguities, but only in accepting one possibility—the defence of the established order?

But we must point out again, before ending these reflections on the urgency of the solutions, that peace is indissolubly linked with development. One war in particular symbolizes the current human drama, that of Viet Nam. It is not only that the enormity of the material means used for destruction makes one think of what could be done with them in development—the United States alone spends there in a month the equivalent of all the aid in gifts and assistance of the entire developed world in a year—but there is a deeper symbolism yet. Viet Nam is becoming, whether we like it or not, the symbol of the battle of the underdeveloped against the developed, the poor against the rich, the oppressed against the oppressor; and it is on the way to making the "free world" a myth. Moreover, *Populorum Progressio* has admirably described the illusion of liberty in a world of inequality.

These reflections beginning from a concrete situation do not lead inevitably to the conclusion that only the opposite ideology, communism, offers the solution. They are intended only to show

that the social process in which we are engaged demands concrete choices, urgent choices, and choices whose ambiguous character can never be totally eliminated. No doubt the whole task will be to see to which side the ambiguity inclines.

### *The Questions Posed to the Theologians*

We are far from throwing upon the theologians the responsibility for questions that politicians, economists, or sociologists do not succeed in resolving. The theologians do not necessarily have an answer to all, but there can be no doubt that human situations ought to be at the basis of their thinking. Some of them say that these situations are today among the *loci theologici*. We shall formulate these questions briefly, and then pose them on three levels.

### THE MEANING OF HUMAN PROGRESS

What is the meaning of the human "project" as it appears today and as it is expressed by the awareness of underdevelopment? What is the meeting point between this "necessary utopia," as Paul Ricoeur called it, and the history of salvation? Does the fate of humanity tend towards a prefabricated model, or does it depend on what the men of our generation and following generations will accomplish?

And what is the significance of the religious in all this? A heavy handicap weighs upon our religious message, on God himself, a handicap that is brought to light precisely by the human sciences, a psychological and social handicap, but also a philosophical one—I would say even a semantic handicap. Is it necessary to proclaim his death in order that he might rise?

Should not the secularization of eschatology be countered with an eschatology of secularization? And what repercussions will this have on our human action? What new imperatives do we find in the actual situation of humanity? Is it a matter of in-

difference relative to the kingdom that we simply live on and accept in the end the logical extension of the current trend of humanity, in which only a small ruling coterie will participate in scientific and technological power, while the rest tread the mill? And if this is not a matter of indifference, what is the value of the struggle which must bring on the necessary break from the old social system, linked to the "natural society" of which Max Weber spoke, a struggle we might call revolutionary?

The first part of *Gaudium et spes* took a great step towards a new vision of human reality, but only a first step. It had to liquidate the burdensome estate of the past, and this is what the Pastoral Constitution did accomplish. Some theologians, certain of whom had not even attended the Council, continued the campaign. We would like to tell them that in undertaking these themes, they are on the right track. There are those who will tell them that their preoccupations are too Western. At this level, such an objection makes no sense. It often issues from those who have not perceived the deep undercurrents of their own society, or who interpret the surface manifestations as efforts towards subversion.

Not long ago a group of agnostic university graduates in a great Latin American city said in conversation: "We are happy to see the Church taking advanced positions in favor of social transformation, proposing basic social reforms for development, but in the end we are waiting for something more from the Church. If development, which is going to require such effort and sacrifice, aims at achieving an affluent society of the North American or European type, it is not worth the trouble. Does the Church have nothing else to tell us?"

#### INTERMEDIATE OBJECTIVES

This questioning, which aims at an eschatology and which also explains the great influence of Père Teilhard de Chardin in such circles, does not reject answers that indicate median objectives. And here the social and cultural differences come in. These

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objectives can be formulated on the international scale, because they exist also at this level; and this is what *Populorum Progressio* has begun to do. But what work remains to be done on the scale of the different continents and nations! The need is notorious.

The theologians who can really orient the local episcopates, or who can by their studies lead Christians who are engaged in action, are rare in the developing countries, often nonexistent. But what is needed is not merely applied thought, which would be content to adapt the theories of European theologians to the problems posed by definite circumstances. What is needed is thought which will itself contribute to the elaboration of doctrine as a whole. Very novel situations often arise which cannot be interpreted from a distance without a precise knowledge of the social and cultural context. Although the Latin American episcopate is beginning to use certain theologians as counsellors, we must recognize that the bishops of Tanzania, for example, when they had to take a position on the occasion of President Nyere's Declaration of Arusha on the future of the nation and the economic and social policy that was to come, did not have such assistance. And what of the bishops of India, Formosa, Nigeria, Madagascar?

We must obviously reach agreement on the role of the Church in the face of these problems. The institutional Church proposes directions, as Paul VI said in *Populorum Progressio*. It can therefore show Christians the way, and collaborate by the same right as other institutions and social groups in the solution of human problems, since, as Father Schillebeeckx tells us, "God is active in the vast world of men, and so the Church is called to take its part in the universal activity of God."<sup>7</sup>

#### THE CRITERIA OF ACTION

The third level on which our questions must be asked is that of the criteria of action, individual or collective. Less today than ever before can the theologians point out the valid answers in

<sup>7</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 156.

all situations. In a specialized and changing world, the great dispersion of decision shows the need for an ethic based on values and criteria rather than on a code. The question of underdevelopment, and particularly the action of Christians in underdevelopment, finds itself also confronted with other problems, problems of the conflict of values. Some examples have already been given, and we will not return to them; but here as well, Christians are waiting for help. Is there any earthly action that is free from all ambiguity? Must we declare with Merleau-Ponty: "When it comes to unleashing a justified revolution, that would aim at banishing from the world some form of inequality, we can never count on the Christians, because the Christians make every earthly engagement relative"?<sup>8</sup>

### THE CHURCH IN THE THIRD WORLD

In this part of the paper, reference will be made almost exclusively to the Catholic Church. This is not from ignorance, and even less from contempt, for what the other Christian Churches are accomplishing; it is intended rather to clarify a certain number of questions. Parallel cases can be found by those who are especially interested.

Let us return to the Church as a sign. We have said that this sign ought to be perceptible to those to whom it is given; that the sign may manifest a present reality or an event to come; that it is intentionally expressed in the form of words, acts, or symbols, but that it may also be informal, that is, radiated by the very personality, individual or collective, of the transmitter; and finally, we said of the Church that it is a sign because it *says*, because it *does*, and because it *is*, but that there may be a gap between these different levels of communication. Before placing all this in relation to the problem of underdevelopment in the Third World, two preliminary remarks are necessary.

The first is that obviously we must take stock of the way the Church is placed in the developing countries. The sign it wishes

<sup>8</sup> Cited *ibid.*, p. 154.

to manifest also depends on the manner of its presence. There is no doubt that the Church has a certain universal credit, representing an incontestable moral influence in the world. The reverberations from the latest social encyclicals, from the Council, from the visit of Paul VI to the U.N. bear witness to it. But on the level of particular societies the problem is posed in different terms. It is possible to establish a typology of the problem which takes into account a certain number of variables, profane as well as religious.

In some cases the Catholic Church is a numerical majority.<sup>9</sup> However, this criterion should be immediately qualified, because the ways in which the Church can be a majority are very different. On the island of Malta, a country in development, 99 per cent go to church on Sunday. Latin America, on the other hand, admits a variable rate of Sunday observance: 2, 5, 10, or 20 per cent. In these countries, it may happen that the Church is an expression of the conscience of the masses, and it may also inspire development. But it may also appear to be linked with power. Then, if the power structure constitutes a drag on development, the Church finds itself implicated, and some of its profane activities also threaten to perpetuate the traditional situation.

In other developing countries, the Church represents an important minority. This is the case in some countries of sub-Saharan Africa. Here the problem takes another form, because the Church cannot be the principal expression of popular conscience, nor the principal mover of development. But its role in many of these countries has been structurally linked with the social, economic, and cultural situation of the colony, and there is the danger that its position as the missionary church may sometimes appear as a prolongation of the colonial situation.

In other countries the Church constitutes only a feeble minority. This is the case in most of the countries of Asia, excepting the Philippines and Viet Nam. Here the sign to be given will be

<sup>9</sup> We have already presented this typology in the volume *Le Tiers-Monde, l'Occident et l'Eglise*, pp. 285 ff.

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more discreet, and the danger is rather that the Church will enclose itself in a ghetto.

These different situations, then, prevent our posing the concrete problems in univocal terms. What might be a positive sign in certain circumstances may appear as a negative one in others. And especially when other variables, social ones, play a part. We may find ourselves faced with feudal societies, as in South Viet Nam before the action of the Viet Minh, in most of the Latin American countries, the Philippines, Ethiopia. Or colonial societies, as in the Portuguese territories of Africa; or former European colonies. We may confront socialist regimes, as in Tanzania or Gabon or Congo-Brazaville; or capitalist ones, as in the Ivory Coast or Formosa. There are a great many variants.

The second remark is shorter: a reminder of the fact that the Church manifests itself sociologically especially by its institutional character. This must be kept in mind.

## A SIGN OF THE UNION WITH GOD

The Church is a sign of God. We might ask, of what God. But we would only be asking again the question already raised before. And yet it is a capital and central question. How can the Church show, as Leslie Dewart says, that "God does not dip his finger into history; he totally immerses himself in it"?<sup>10</sup> How can the Church express, in terms accessible to men who live in the very centre of the drama of underdevelopment, the way God shows himself in the very core of the work of men for development? How can the Church show them the role of the Word and the role of the Spirit? And so, how is the problem of mission and development to be posed? What is the connection between the two? Are we not involved in a real crisis in the mission? A current study of how missionaries view their tasks seems to suggest just that. Does it not arise partly from the fact that no clear link has been indicated by traditional theology? The in-

<sup>10</sup> *The Future of Belief*, New York and London, 1967, p. 194.

terest of the missions in temporal action was linked to a sign of charity or to a means of conversion, and this is why it has been spoken of in defence of the Church's rights when the new states tried to nationalize the medical and educational institutions. As new values are perceived in the work of development and a number of young missionaries come to understand it, certain missions are turning into agencies of development. What are we to think of this?

This is not a simple question, and no ready-made answer can be given to it. And yet if the theologians do not collaborate with the missions to resolve it, the disorder threatens to become great, among those who restrict themselves to the service of the temple and so live on the border of the world in development, as well as among those who involve the ecclesial institution in it without much discernment.

But such a theological judgment cannot be given without reference to society as it exists. This reference is most important for the sign that the institutional Church will give. In fact, the rapid evolution of development of one part of mankind has made us witness in a relatively short period a complete mutation of societies. Taking over from traditional institutions, only highly specialized organisms are capable of responding adequately to increased needs. Their specialization is the guarantee of their existence.

The Church as an institution is no exception to this general rule. In a specialized society, the Church will not be recognized unless it appears as a specific institution with its own proper function. There are already many countries where the tasks of the Church in the areas of health and education are questioned because they are considered merely temporary solutions.

We must really take into account the fact that this is the way it will be in the countries of the Third World, which are progressively orienting themselves towards societies of this type. That is why every temporal action of the institutional Church in development will be accepted only insofar as it justifies itself by an institutional need on the part of society *and* in a perspective of supply. Lacking this justification, the action runs

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the risk of appearing to be in competition, and consequently of transforming the sign given by the Church. An inquiry recently completed in Tanzania on the role of the Christian Churches in instruction showed that while the population in general reacted favorably to this role, the social and political leaders, even Christians, affirmed in significant numbers that instruction was not related to the proper function of the Churches. They saw it purely as a supplemental task.

But if the Church is a sign of that which is, it is also, the theologians tell us, a sign of what is to come. It ought to be an eschatological sign, the sign of the kingdom of God. We may well ask what the sociologist can contribute on this subject, but the answer is simple enough. Once more: it is necessary that the sign be visible, audible, intelligible. Here we are touching not only on the word which the Church can transmit in the form of a message, not only on the activities of the Church, but also on its being. This cannot be expressed except to the extent that the Church shows itself detached from power. The sociologist will be tempted to say that all identification with power, be it political or economic, and all use of temporal power by the Church signifies a "secularization" of the Church. Perhaps this would be an interesting criterion for measuring its intervention in favour of development. So the Church's encouragement to development by her support of social reforms and forces that are revolutionary in the sense given above, while it is serious and concrete, cannot identify revolution with the kingdom; and consequently all participation should remain subject to constant criticism.

It seems, then, that we must ask the theologians to develop this eschatological aspect of the sign to be given by the Church. This is a dimension which men of our times will understand, especially those who wish to emerge from underdevelopment and are struggling hard for a better world. If this world is that which Western society or socialist society proposes as a model, it will not be worth the trouble. But what is this new world, this new earth and new heaven, and what relation is there between it and the process of development?

A SIGN OF THE UNITY OF THE WHOLE HUMAN RACE

This unity is one of the most profound values held by the world of the present. The terrible failures of humanity in this area are its most painful failures. And the Church is the sign both of what is and of what is to come also regarding communion among men. But for it to be a sign, it is not sufficient for the Church to create such unity on a purely supernatural level. The sign must be visible.

We are still speaking here of the Church as an institution, because it is at this level that the most important sociological problems are raised; but it is quite evident that the specifically ecclesial existence of each person is concerned with each of these problems. To facilitate analysis, we will speak of what the Church says, what it does, and what it is.

On the level of the message expressed to the world (what the Church says), a most important stage has been passed. John XXIII and Paul VI have spoken and continue to speak, in terms that are clear, accessible, and unambiguous, of development and peace. The message which they have issued has been perceived by the whole of humanity, and perceived as coming from an institution which they personify and whose mission is to bring to men's minds the "necessary utopia." In this sense, the Church is giving a sign. In the Third World this sign is echoed by the great figures of the episcopate; a Bishop Larrain in Chile, a Dom Helder Camara in Brazil, a Cardinal Duval in Algeria, and also in certain documents of the national episcopates.

Yet even in this area much remains to be done. Not only because situations are evolving rapidly and require constant attention, but because the Church ought to play the same role on the local level. If the sign of unity must be given today by solidarity in development, the Churches of the developed countries have still a long road to travel. But the same is true of many of the local churches of the developing countries, because the manifestation of unity will also come on the level of the societies of the developing countries, whether by willing effort towards development or by the solidarity between the rich and the poor of these countries.

What the Church says is evidently not sufficient for the transmission of an effective sign. We must ask, "What does it do?" We will examine two questions: the work of the Church in development, and the image which the Church projects in the developing countries. Some say that the Church has always worked for development, witness the charitable work it has done since the beginning of its existence. Did it not operate all the hospitals in the Eastern Empire? Was it not the originator of European education? And what about its immense work in what we call today the Third World? All this is quite true. But we are living today a cultural and social mutation, and the concept of development as it is used today is new. It is inexact to say that the Church has always worked for development. It is at best bad apologetics.

But to say this is to take nothing away from the merit of all those who have been devoted to the service of man through the centuries. We find ourselves now faced with a new situation. Charitable tasks will always exist even though they take different forms. And they will always be a sign of the love of the Lord. It will certainly be necessary to discover in every period the forms appropriate to it. But development is another matter. It is concerned with the very vocation of humanity as well as of each man in particular. Humanity feels itself called to this objective and progressively more capable of achieving it. It is a collective task, as deeply rooted in mankind as life itself. To live is to develop. And everyman, every human collectivity, has a right to development as to life. And this is why development cannot be undertaken with a theology of poverty. Even underdevelopment then, which is only an aspect of development, ought to be placed in the theological vision of the creation, the role of Christ in the world, the new creation. To rise from misery is not a sufficient objective.

But the consequences of such a reality go even further. We cannot confuse within institutions the charitable action of the Church and its action for development. No doubt charity, taken in its deepest sense, includes all the actions of the Christian; but concretely, the sign given by charitable institutions is quite limited. Confusion in just this area led the Church down many

false trails in the nineteenth century.<sup>11</sup> It is the same today on a world scale. This is why the Pontifical Commission *Justitia et Pax* was an organization worth fighting for, and why *Caritas Internationalis* could not be a coordinating organization or a representative of the Church in its action for development. Yet nobody will deny that there are close links between these areas, just as there were in the nineteenth century between labour action and the relief of physical and moral miseries.

The problem is so concrete in the developing countries that the sociologist would like to ask the following question of the theologians. Can one say that charitable action belongs properly to the Church as an institution, not of course as a monopoly, but as an activity that is profoundly significant of the Church and which it will exercise to the end of time, while direct intervention in development on the plane of action always has a supplemental character?

Aside from these profound questions, it is good to direct our attention to the rapid transformation of signs. In the Northeast of Brazil, the action of the episcopate for development, since it has realized a genuine success in the area of syndicates, basic education, or cooperatives, appeared to some (and self-criticism is always necessary) as a new and moreover intelligent way for the Church to use the social and political power it has not renounced. Malevolence in interpretation is obviously never absent, but the transformation of the sign indicates that a revision has to be made.

What the Church does is extremely important with regard to what it says; and to the extent that we are truly convinced of the fact that underdevelopment is one of the fundamental human problems, we will be judged by the signs we give of our interest. This is true for the totality of Christians and for all local churches, but it is also true for the Church as an institution. Permit me to give some examples; once again, these examples

<sup>11</sup> A Belgian Christian layman, active in social problems, said at the time (in 1846), "We must stop wishing to resolve the poverty, the misery of the workers by charity. The Church might die of its charity" (Ducpétiaux).

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do not call for a judgment of the intentions of the persons involved, but simply of the nature of the sign given.

In a certain country of Africa, the Church has played an important role in education. Here as in most African countries education is in full evolution. Planning seems indispensable, and the government takes the problem very seriously. Christian (Catholic and Protestant) education represents a very important percentage of schools, pupils, and teachers. For education to be truly integrated into the process of development, its structures must be reviewed, studied, and reorganized on the national level. The episcopal conference has a permanent Catholic educational commission at its disposal, and the Protestant Churches have also created one. But the Churches do not assign personnel to these national services. They offer men who are temporarily available, missionaries recalled for a rest, and sometimes the service is performed by the secretary of another commission. Why? Largely because the divided diocesan structures do not permit the churches to conduct a truly national policy. No one wants to release the men necessary for such national service, and worse yet, no one is particularly interested in forming it. The sign given is not that of enlightened interest in development, but that of a particularist interest, linked to the ecclesiastical structures as they were established.

In a country of Asia we witness a multiplication of hospitals. For a time, the rivalry took place among Christian denominations, but today it is a competition even among the rites within the Catholic Church. It has become a matter of prestige among the dioceses and sometimes even within the same city. These hospitals are built with money collected elsewhere, and their maintenance is almost impossible to assure in a rational manner. They must turn away the poor, because the institution must be well maintained. And yet the religious and lay nurses are devoted to them, sometimes in a heroic manner.

In Cuba, an institution of Catholic education reserved for the daughters of wealthy families spent, a very few years before the establishment of the present regime, several thousand dollars to erect an iron fence around the property of the establishment. It is now a technical school for young workers. But even at that

time, such an act appeared as an insult to the poor, and only reinforced the idea that Catholic education was reserved exclusively for the "social elite," precisely those who were opposed in their whole attitude to development.

In the underdeveloped countries, ostentatious expenditures are among the classic complaints. Often it is a matter of prestige-compensation. But the Christians of these countries are invited to struggle against this tendency, and *Populorum Progressio* speaks of its insupportable scandal. Yet the Catholic Church builds luxurious nunciatures in these countries, whose prestige function seems fundamental. And often, in Latin America, for example, it is the government or certain families of the ruling oligarchy who volunteer to build and outfit these properties. A Latin American government, whose people are struggling in dreadful misery, has offered a million dollars to build a new nunciature. Will the nuncio have the courage to refuse, or will he come out of the affair with a red hat?

These examples may seem harsh. But must we close our ears so as not to hear the feedback on these signs from those who are struggling for justice, the emancipation of the oppressed, and the development of the masses? If the Church speaks, attention should be given to how it translates its words into action. If the sign should be eschatological, we should take care that it manifest itself otherwise than by prestige! One sometimes has the painful impression that there are two Churches: the Church of the poor, of development, of intelligence, of apostolic work; and the other one. Now the devotion and disinterestedness of this other Church may be just as great, but the sign it gives is contradictory.

Finally, *what the Church is*. The sign is not given only by what it says and what it does. In the Third World the Church is an institution that has its own face, and I would like here to ask only two questions. The first, which we have recognized anew in the last few years, is the cultural expression of the Church. This is not only a matter of language, nor even of art (though one thinks of one of the parish churches of Madras, which is an exact copy of the basilica of Lourdes). It is also a matter of the whole organization of the Church, of its forms of

authority, of the way it carries out its priesthood, and finally of its manner of thought, its semantic expression of revealed reality, its philosophical frame of reference. What sign of universality, indispensable for creating the unity of all men, are we giving when we impose a culture along with the Church? But the Council posed this problem well; what must now be done is to carry out solutions, but even to their final consequences, and this will obviously take a long time.

The second problem, a more recent one in its consequences perhaps, is that of the relations between the local churches. Suppose a project of mutual aid is organized between local churches: lenten collections, sending of volunteers, priests and laymen. What are the principles to direct these relations? Will we see the criteria of aid established in fact by the churches that give, because they must defer to the mentality of the donors? Will we see the receiving churches adapt their action, even if they think it is not worth the trouble, to the criteria of the giving churches, because they can receive money for this action and not for that one? Or is it necessary, in a sympathetic effort to correct the situation, to accept as criterion the unanimous advice of the episcopal conference for a major decision in the matter of development, a decision which might reveal itself as a catastrophe?

There is more than one practical question here. The role of the Church in development and the pattern of relations between churches are at stake. If we let ourselves be led only by practical considerations, we risk going off in directions that sound ecclesiological reflection could not accept.

The questions posed to the theologians, then, are many. We wished to indicate two fundamental lines of inquiry to be followed. The first concerns the profound meaning of development for man and the second the sign which the Church as an institution gives in the Third World. Obviously, we foresee a mass of other questions that may be asked and certainly will be. Many are still very imperfectly formulated. At any rate, there is a fruitful field for collaboration between theologians and sociologists in this vital area of the life of mankind, and of the meaning which the Church is obliged to endow it with.

## 21.

# THE FAMILY IN INTERACTION WITH THE WORLD

BERNARD HÄRING, C.SS.R.

MAN cannot understand his being and his destiny unless he sees himself in the perspective of "being-with." He cannot be truly he-himself without paying full attention to the calling that comes from God and is mediated in a manifold chorus by neighbors, by communities to which he belongs, and finally by the whole world around him. God calls each person by a unique name, but his call is always a rallying call.

The most intimate, the most fundamental "being-with," is expressed in the relationship of a person to his family: the relationship between husband and wife, father and son, father and daughter, daughter and mother, mother and son and, last but not least, the relationship of each of them to the "we" or the whole family.

The relationship within the family cannot be described adequately as only "interaction," because there is more than interaction. The mutual love and commitment of the spouses, the sharing of the whole life, is interaction and yet it is more. What they finally are in their fidelity, gratitude, solidarity, joy and peace is a mutual gift to one another, a life-giving "being-with" in word and response, in which they know each other and shape themselves and each other.

The child owes himself to the parents. His joy and trust in

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ife, trust in his parents, and finally his fundamental trust in God is his share of the harvest of the harmony, love, fidelity of the parents. In the same sense, "children contribute very substantially to the welfare of their parents" (*Gaudium et spes*, art. 50). The mutual relationship within the family reflects to some extent the relationship of man with God: a relationship that is by no means something additional to human existence but is integral. Man is what he is through and in the calling that comes from God and to the degree of his loving response.

All this remains true, though to a lesser degree, for the interaction between family and world. By "world" here I mean the totality of the reality, personal and impersonal, that surrounds the family and acts upon it and/or is influenced or shaped by the family.

When we speak of "world," we should keep in mind the complexity of its meaning. It is God's good creation, made in view of man that he may administer and shape it in fraternal love for the glory of God; it is the creature made a victim of frustration by man's sin; it is the created universe which in all its parts is groaning as if in the pangs of childbirth (Rom. 8, 2); it is man and all things around him, insofar as he and all the universe is redeemed and, even now, has already received the first fruits of the harvest to come (Rom. 8, 23); it is the world of man shaped by the heirs of Adam and by the heirs of Christ; it is that totality of the atmosphere around man in which the eschatological struggle between the sons of light and the powers of darkness has to be carried out (Eph. 6, 10-17). All the good and best possibilities of the world around us are ours if we are Christ's as Christ is God's.

When we speak of "world," we must be aware of this complexity and of the interwovenness of the history of the world, history of man, history of sin and of salvation. There is no other choice left to us as disciples of Christ than to be actors in the history of salvation: to shape the world around us or to become captives of the history of sin. Either we bring salvation to the world around us or we will succumb to the powers of

darkness that operate in the environment. This is true for the individual man and for the family.

The family most unprotected from the dangers of the world around it is the "closed family," concerned only for itself. To scorn the world, or to look upon it chiefly and first as bad and dangerous, is a sin against the dogma of creation and redemption. It gives more glory to the devil and the heirs of Adam's sin than to the Creator and Christ and his followers. One cannot take up the great shield of faith with which to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one unless one really does let the readiness of the gospel of peace be the shoes on his feet (see Eph. 6, 15-16).

### GRATITUDE THAT OPENS THE FAMILY TO ALL THE GOOD AROUND IT

The way of receiving God's gifts truly is in gratitude. The ungrateful person locks his own door. Since he does not appreciate the love with which these things are offered, he cannot perceive their true value. Man cannot enjoy what is the best of all things unless he praises the giver of all good gifts. He who does not see the origin, the interpersonal quality, the loving design, remains alone.

The approach of the Christian family to the world around it should be one of gratitude and appreciation, of joyful acceptance of all that is implied by the gift of life in the world. Who receives in gratitude and shares in joy will ever and even ask: "how can I render for all the good I have received?"

First and above all, the Christian family is alert to the opportunities presented by our time, by the *kairos*, through the social, economic, cultural, and religious conditions, and through the high human qualities of people whom they meet. The progress of culture, the greater participation in public life, the stream of information that puts the members of a family in contact with important events throughout the world and contact with various interpretations of those events: all the

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immensely enrich the dialog between members of the family and between the family and its milieu.

Gratitude urges and enables the family to manifest responsibility towards the world around it. Today's individual family has countless opportunities to enrich its environment with the warmth of interest, love, gentleness, with the light of discernment, with illumined convictions, and through commitment to urgent social and cultural tasks. In earlier times it was thought that only the "head of the family" should be interested in public, social, and cultural life outside the home. Today it is imperative that the whole family take its active role in response to all the good it receives from the world.

A family's commitment to the world around it is not only disinterested gratitude, however. It represents also a legitimate interest for the welfare of the family itself. The more families share in responsibility the world around them, the healthier will be their own development. But the legitimate self-interest should be integrated into their gratitude, and the legitimate interest for their own welfare at the present time should also be an expression of responsibility for future generations.

## DISCERNMENT AND IMMUNIZATION

The attitude of a Christian family towards the world around it cannot be one of naïveté. The present time in the history of salvation is marked by the eschatological battle between light and darkness, truth and lie, love and selfishness. Both Christ and his followers and Adam and his heirs have made "investments" of their spirit in the world.

In order to keep and enhance everything that is just, good, and honest and to reject everything that is so polluted by the spirit of pride and selfishness that it cannot be purified, the Christian must be alert and must learn to discern. Education of a mature conscience means essentially the acquirement of the gift of discernment. There must be a constant effort on the part of the family as a whole, and of each member of the family,

to discern and to encourage the good that enters into its realm whether through the voice of neighbors, the newspaper, radio television, movies, the cultural associations, civil or social groups or, last but not least, through the various aspects and movements of the Church.

That the family is constantly affected by the darker elements of the world around it cannot be overlooked or minimized. But immunization is better than flight. Against the "darkness" of the world, the family immunizes itself through its own fundamental attitudes and activities. The best immunization is a fully conscious decision to shape the environment, together with other men of good will, for the better. This definite decision and permanent commitment sharpens the vision and helps the judgment in the ongoing process of "look—judge—act."

But the judgment is not merely a looking through the window to another part of the world. It begins with observation and discernment of the family life itself: "How do we, as a family, affect our environment? How do the unfavorable powers in our environment affect the family? How can we improve ourselves so that we may improve our environment, and how can we better the environment in order to better our family?" This way of looking at things expresses the interaction, the mutual responsibility.

Conscious involvement in the cause of betterment, openness for new developments, and awareness of interaction on all the different levels create a positive program of immunization from whatever influences need to be overcome. Moral evaluation must be made not only in view of abstract rules and norms but even more in view of the "hierarchy of values" and the "order of love," in view of the wholeness of man and the common good and, last but not least, in a spirit of prayer that opens the eyes for the light of faith and for the operations of the Holy Spirit. Genuine openness to present opportunities is rooted in a sense of the continuity of life that sees the "here and now" in the great perspective of the past and of the future, in the continuous faithful action of God with his people through all the history of salvation.

## THE PROTECTIVE ROLE OF THE FAMILY

Under the influence of Manicheism and Jansenistic pessimism, and under the impact of a "protective society," manuals of moral theology tended to treat the relationships of the individual or the family towards the environment—towards "the world"—on a one-way basis. The view was one of flight before the proximate occasion of sin; one should be "in" the world but not "of" the world. This misunderstanding of biblical language made the whole world one great danger and opened the realm of the subconscious to a constant expectation of temptations. It brought about a blindness to the positive opportunities the world presented, and was a way of escaping full Christian responsibility. It bedeviled the world and concealed the many corners in ourselves where the devils could hide or could even present themselves as guardian angels for selfish people and groups.

Modern naïve belief in the secular city runs to the opposite extreme and forgets about the protective role of the family. It was always a shelter, not only from the blood-avengers and wild animals; it protected also against the assaults of instability and anonymity, protected against false gods.

The family must elect its own friends and guests. It should be rooted in a community that enriches and strengthens its good spirit and its potentialities of true love. Not each family can choose each neighborhood without endangering its integrity. A family that hopes to contribute to the better shaping of its environment and to prepare personalities capable of shaping the future in a responsible, mature way, must measure its own strength with the dangers around it. Passivity, apathy, non-involvement surrenders personal and family integrity to outside forces. The family, for instance, that turns on the television daily for hours at a time, without caring for a responsible choice of program or making any effort towards discernment of what they have seen, is allowing the managers of the television channel to mould its spirit. Likewise, the family that neglects

to vote for responsible political administration is encouraging forces of corruption to mould its environment.

The bare protective role is not the chief responsibility of the Christian family in the world. Its essential role is that of witness of truth and love, and bearer of light to illumine the world around it. But the role of witness cannot be fulfilled in the world without a proportionate care for the protective role.

### SOME NEW ASPECTS AND ROLES OF THE FAMILY IN INTERACTION WITH THE MODERN WORLD

Many moral concepts and moral principles about marriage and family life were formed in a world greatly different from ours. And so were marriage and family life different. I disagree with Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels who try to explain the whole of marriage and family, with all its moral and religious patterns, as a by-product—a superstructure—of the socio-economic life. But the problem is not resolved by flight into static “objective principles” with no effort to “distinguish the eternal realities from their changing expressions” (see Art. 52 of the *Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*). Not only the word-expression changes; the life-expression, the incarnation of the abiding values of marriage and family, also changes in interaction with the changing world. Christians cannot “redeem the present opportunities” (*ibid.*, see Eph. 5, 16; Col. 4, 5) without a painstaking effort to distinguish what has to be distinguished.

#### *A Different Emphasis on Conjugal Love and Intimacy in Family Life*

Married love has aspects that abide as objective values and criteria of discernment in all cultures. But in human terms the total meaning of married love has different overtones and colors in a patriarchal type family of the absolutist epoch than in the partnership family of a democratic, urban, industrialized era.

Let us consider a male-centered patriarchal style of family. The chastity of the girls and women of “honest” families

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well protected by males who, without great qualms of conscience, allow themselves occasional or habitual exploitation of prostitutes. These males desire children chiefly because children are social and economic necessity for the patriarchal family. For them the meaning of sexual experience—even in the sight of their up-to-now well protected wives—is formed in the context of their experience of paid “love-making” or at least in the context of a society where this type of male “privilege” greatly affects masculine attitudes. The concrete “calling” to married love comes to this well protected and sexually uninstructed girl, and to this less protected man of a male-centered culture, through the decision of two patriarchal kinships who give them mutually into a marriage. Their wedding means, above all, integration into this concrete kinship and patriarchal family. They are expected to fulfill their “marital rights of having acts which are *per se* apt to procreation.” They are also instructed to love each other in their daily life. But here love means, on the part of the woman, mostly obedience and, on the part of the husband, paternalistic exercise of authority, care, and representation. The controlling power of the two kinships and of the whole society guarantees stability. The constant working and living together of several couples of two generations has a stabilizing and integrating dynamism. Conjugal love receives its total concrete meaning from the eternal reality of marriage and from this whole system of family and society.

Conjugal love today has other colors and ingredients. Because of the new world in which it is experienced, love has to be conquered and renewed ever and ever. It is not a passive habit but an ongoing decision. This conjugal love has its inception in a free choice of the mate, a choice no longer made in view of the integration of a girl into a new kinship but rather in view of reciprocal personal preference, of love in view of the couple-family. Both of the principals may have had some “love experience” with or without sexual intercourse, but neither of them would reckon an affair with a prostitute as a love-experience.

In the final choice of the mate, the quality of communication—the “dialog”—is considered a decisive point and motif. The

woman is now a partner not only in procreating and educating children, but a full partner in dialog on all the things that interest the man. The success and the stability of marriage is no longer a result of a cultural pattern. It represents the ability and responsibility of two.

Both partners live a great part of their life outside the family circle, surrounded by others who could be considered as possible mates. Their hours together receive an added quality and importance in view of the personal emptiness of an anonymous style of social and economic life in a managerial society. The I-Thou between husband and wife, parents and child, and the I-Thou-We of this nuclear family is contrasted to, and to some extent shaped by, the new type of life in a great industrial and urban society. To a considerable extent it is a most needed compensation.

Marriage and family is the place where man and woman are willed to emerge from their impersonal roles in the outside world to experience their wholeness as persons in a genuine interpersonal relationship. Intercourse and mutual tenderness receive its "objective" meaning—in its wholeness—through this total situation. To all this is added the effect of the modern movie, magazine, and television on love, and the power of public opinion and new structures of civil legislation on marriage.

Then, too, a new style of spirituality must be seen in Catholic teaching and literature that tries to come to grips with this new reality and its understanding. But there are still many formulations of moral norms that were worded under a different sky. What it presented as pure "objective" truth and objective norm often combines a great deal of a past era with an unconscious yielding to influences of the present world.

Against this background of differences must be seen, for example, the disparity between what it meant in an earlier culture and what it means today when it is asserted that conjugal love is a "secondary goal" of marriage while procreation is the "primary" goal not only of the whole institution of marriage but of each marital act ("procreative" act). Without even mentioning the new scientific insights that make it nonsense to

insist that each conjugal act is a "procreative" act, it is obvious that such a thesis today has totally different aspects and impacts. It is not a case of merely seeing these things through different colored eyeglasses; it is a case of seeing quite different things, although the same words are used to describe them.

### *A Principle of Canon Law in Two Different Worlds*

The "principle" of canon 1130, CIC, which asserts that the "innocent spouse" has never any obligation to re-admit the adulterer to the use of marital rights, must be seen against the background of an epoch where not only had legalistic moralism favored a kind of self-righteousness of "innocent" people, but where psychology had not yet penetrated and disturbed the all too clear categories of "innocent" and "adulterer." In canon 1130 there is not only a lack of distinction between an external compulsory law structure ("no obligation") and a religious moral appeal (the very important task to forgive)—whereby this latter remains concealed; the social background of this canon was a stable family system where such a punishment could be effective. The adulterer who was penalized by deprivation of his or her marital rights still lived in the "family" and the social pattern kept him there. Today the same directive, if understood as a moral principle or as "sacred law" of the Church, is not only against the chief directive of the sermon on the plain, "Be merciful just as your Father is merciful" (Lk. 6, 36); it also means, in today's social world, a final destruction of the marriage unit and leads with almost total certainty to divorce and re-marriage of one partner or of both.

### *Different Meaning of Divorce in Interaction with Different Worlds*

Divorce and remarriage have fundamental aspects which remain the same in all cultures, but its total meaning in the life

of the person cannot be determined without the social and cultural context.

The divorce law of the Mosaic epoch must be seen not only against the background of people who could not yet clearly distinguish legal regulation from morality; it should be seen also as a great step forward, as much as could be done in that historical moment. The male could no longer dismiss his wife without a juridical procedure, but it remained finally a decision only of the male in a male-centered society.

The admonishment of St. Paul in 1 Cor. 7, 10–11: “A wife must not separate herself from her husband; if she does, she must either remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband and the husband must not divorce his wife” must be read against the background of that patriarchal world where it was felt in a very special way as shocking if the wife took the initiative in separating from her husband. The issue that treats of her case does not necessarily include the totally different case—totally different in *that culture* but not in the culture in which the text is now read—of the abandoned woman who has no chance whatsoever to be reconciled. Therefore moralists cannot solve new questions with just one word of the Bible.

The situation of the divorced or abandoned spouse was at times a very serious one. But there was not only a difference as to moral guilt when divorce was decided against the whole pattern of the economic, cultural, social, and religious structure; there was a difference as well in the social situation of the abandoned woman—and generally of any single person—when the individual still had his place and social identification within the larger patriarchal family. Today the abandoned spouse often has no possibility of being readjusted within a larger family group. He or she has no choice but to be a “loner.”

### *Birth Regulation in the Historical Context*

The problems of responsible parenthood and of the means of birth regulation cannot be resolved by consideration merely

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of the interaction between family and world, but neither can they be seriously studied without full consideration of profound historical changes.

In the pre-scientific world the situation was vastly different from what it is today. The infant mortality rate was so high that families often could not obtain the desirable number of living children. The child was fundamentally family-related: necessary and useful for the economic and social needs of the family group. Only a sufficient number of children could assure security and dignity for the old, who were necessarily cared for by the younger family members. Education was a simpler matter and less expensive in a static society with a clear pattern of class, work, and customs. The human race as well as the individual family needed a maximum of births. Innumerable diseases diminished the fertility of many married people. Eugenic considerations or diagnoses about dangers of future pregnancy were not even thought of. The condemnation, therefore, of a deliberate use of means of birth regulation received its moral explication either in the context of that society and those situations, or as a reaction against Manichean tendencies which considered birth as an evil to be prevented. Sometimes there was little possibility of distinguishing mere contraception from magic arts or from abortive maneuvers.

Through the progress of the sciences and through industrialization, the "world" has changed, and with it the whole situation within the parental vocation. There is now a low mortality rate, prolonged and higher fertility. No older generation or kin is present to aid or substitute for the parents; the children's welfare depends wholly on the well-being of the parents, especially of the mother. Long and expensive education is necessary if the child is to be prepared for life in the scientific-technical epoch. Children are no longer "family-related" in the earlier sense, no longer necessary for the social, economic, and cultural needs of the family. Instead, the family is in a new sense "child-related," in that it is now the family that serves without socio-economic remuneration. The child also, in a new way, is "society-related." Not the parents but society and the

economy profit from the training the child receives. It is also chiefly society and the social economy that is troubled if there are not enough children with a high degree of cultural and professional training and if there are too many children who lack the proper preparation for modern social, economic, and cultural life.

Even greater and deeper are the cultural and socio-psychological changes in the modern world. These changes are correlated with the changes mentioned above, but not totally, and not in a way of necessary causality whereby these cultural and socio-psychological changes can be shaped and reshaped by the families affected by them.

Except for a small minority of the lowest social class that still follows an earlier pattern in procreation and does not follow the adjustments in education, modern men and women tend towards a reflective and active attitude of planning in most of the processes of life, beginning with scientific agriculture and scientific medicine. There is an ever-growing conviction, expressed in all structures of life, that life does not regulate itself; man has to do it, using all his insights, energies, and skills. It is not instinct, nor a "divine nature," nor a "biological nature" that regulates; it has to be human reason and human responsibility: the very qualities that make man a morally responsible being and assigns to him his human task.

The changed importance and meaning of conjugal love within the new context must also be seen in relation to the new needs and motives of birth regulation. The question is how to harmonize the exigencies of conjugal love—of this age!—with the responsible transmission of life in a social context wherein moral decisions must be made on the basis of a wholly new set of facts.

If, in view of this interaction of world and family, one continues to respond with pre-formulated principles that express the interactions, needs, and problems of an earlier and totally different world, he will not be taken seriously, or else he will be considered as one who preaches that his God died with the beginning of the scientific epoch.

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This does not mean, however, that the moralist has to give precisely the answer that is desired at the moment and looked upon as the most comfortable for men of this age. Today's moral responsibilities have not lessened; they have different facets, that is all.

## SOCIAL CONSCIENCE OF THE FAMILY AND FAMILY-CONSCIENCE OF SOCIETY

In view of the deep impact of the interaction between family and environment (the totality of the world around it), all the human realities of culture, society, politics, international relations, church structures, religious activities and expressions, should be consciously and carefully studied and tested in view of their impact on marriage and family. Conversely, all families should develop not only a general social consciousness, but also a specific awareness of conscience in the matter of their own opportunities and responsibilities to shape their world in favor of a healthy development of family culture. To promote some such studies—and more fundamentally to prepare an awareness of the need of such studies and the readiness to initiate them—would be a most useful and urgent objective of the different family movements.

Moral and pastoral theology has a tremendous task to study all questions related to marriage and family, as well as to social life in the perspective of interaction and mutual relationship between family and the whole varied social context throughout history. The permanent values and the essential mission of marriage and family have to be rethought and re-evaluated in this perspective. If this is not thoroughly done we cannot hope that the Christian family will be a testimony to the presence of the living God in our world.

## 22.

# YOU CAN HAVE SEX WITHOUT CHILDREN: CHRISTIANITY AND THE NEW OFFER

ELIZABETH ANSCOMBE

POSSIBILITY is the destruction of contentment. The necessities of the past were accepted as man's lot—or woman's lot. Women, desiring men, were more or less under their thumbs, particularly in sexual matters. Hence: very frequent childbirth, with nothing much to do about it. Any complaint was a complaint against the nature of things. Anybody's lot is hard in the absence of health, of fairness and kindness, or of prosperity and respect; for a woman, the absence of all these would be a frequent feature of her married state itself. Yet being unmarried seemed even worse—if we leave aside the monastic ideal, which provided an alternative in two great religions.

But why use the past tense? This *is* the general situation; whether it is to be changed by modern technology, who can say? Yet the change now under way among the prosperous in the West is a fantastic one. The possibility of controlling conception is placed in the woman's hands, and she can still keep her man! Limitation always was possible on the man's part if he were anxious enough to avoid conception but still wanted intercourse; but the method was unpleasing and of ill repute. Indeed many women have thus been denied children they wanted; but upon the whole such male anxiety could not be counted on to

prevent women from conceiving and bearing unwillingly, in sorrow. A woman would have recourse to abortion—as little liked, but more desperately felt to be necessary.

"She must marry if she will," says St. Paul, "but I think she will have trouble in the flesh." "Not nearly so much as before," says modern technology: "you can have sex without children, as much as you—or your husband—may want." What a huge difference this makes to women, and through them to society. The former situation, though still general, appears more and more intolerable. And women come more and more into consideration on their own account.

Of course things did not and do not always go so harshly; I am speaking rather of what is often actual and always a risk. Things were generally happiest in times and places where child-bearing was a woman's pride and many children her honor. Perhaps there are no such places now; according to report, abortion is everywhere very common.

We have to consider what behaviour to think right for Christians in the new situation. Till very recently the Catholic Church has taken a stand against programs for large-scale teaching of contraceptive methods. But if it is indeed true that abortion in our time is pandemic, then this stand ought not to be kept up. Even if we assume that the Church will continue the old teaching that a faithful Catholic is not to practice contraception of any kind, even so it may be desirable to have contraceptive programs as we have brothels—to avoid worse evils; for even if contraception is bad, abortion is far worse. At one time abortion must have been increased, not decreased, by the encouragement of contraception; but in many places, if report is trustworthy, that time is past. So our view on this question is not necessarily determined by our view on the possibility of modifying the sexual code for individuals.

Possibility has turned what was once (and in general still is) perforce accepted as woman's lot into an unacceptable, because avoidable, strain and strait in her life.

But we must remember we are still the same people. If many conceptions have been and still are deplorable, then the consent

to the drive that produced them was too; and it is the same drive that operates even now and is as little reflected upon.

Or should we say no? No doubt the sexual drive as such is still the same; but in the new situation, where there is contraception, are not the act and will different? Surely we must grant that there is a difference. In the old situation, there was a will and an act contrary to the virtue of chastity because of the reckless and callous begetting of children; surely now there is a significant difference, if improvident procreation is excluded? I think it is easier to see what we must say here than to give an account of the answer.

The great change in the world means that there must be a great change in the attitudes and thoughts of the great mass of believing and practising lay people. For centuries past, the laity could be passive, except for the rare individual and except for each one's secret spiritual life. The reason was the existence of "Christendom." Under Christendom, it no longer took special energy to be a Christian, as in the early centuries; in most places in Christian countries, people did not have to choose a form of life. There just was a basic form of life there: lay people—especially laywomen—either were its victims or, favored by fortune, were happy in it. Goodness or badness of life was a specification *within* the basic form. Someone who wanted to lead a holy life would often, if the thought came to him in time, not marry but enter religion—decisively adopting a new form of life. A married lay person who wanted to lead a holy life would accept as from God's hand what came his, or her, way—the "trouble in the flesh" that St. Paul speaks of. Numerous and burdensome pregnancies, for example, would be accepted, not at all because a distinctly ascetical form of life was being embraced; for the avoidance of them was a peculiar wickedness, and this was a woman's usual lot anyhow. Her personal goodness would develop partly in her attitude to what happened to her. Her unconditional attachment to God would then appear especially in her submission to what happened and her concern for the education of her children. The general form of Christian life more or less taught everyone the ideal of be-

havior, and people more or less—no doubt rather less—conformed to it. An attitude towards the control of some of life's fundamental conditions did not need to be taught, for no such control was possible. The death of self-will—an ascetical aim—might be accomplished by a certain manner of accepting events ordinarily unavoidable.

Now all that is changed. We need, as hardly ever before, a special energy and a positive ascetical theology, for lay people as such. I believe we have not yet got such a theology: can we see at all what it would be like?

We cannot see the road before us unless we can tell what to think about the Church's teaching, so far unrevoked, on contraception—or at least what is here at stake. That teaching might remain unrevoked, and unamended, —and unrepeated. For most people it would then become a dead letter, like the teaching of popes, councils, and all the great doctors against usury. What confessor would now refuse absolution to me if I would not give up the money-spinning profession of a money-lender to poor people in distress, or would not restore interest taken for profit's sake on a personal loan to a friend in need? But again, have you ever heard a preacher telling you that what you have beyond the needs of your station is *owed as a debt of justice* to relieve the needy? Yet this is Christian doctrine, and if it is not taught, the watchmen are neglecting their office. So the teaching on contraception that has hitherto prevailed would not turn out to have been wrong merely because it passed into abeyance. There would rather be needed a new papal statement, which would have to be more authoritative in form than previous utterances to the contrary effect, and would have to explain those away. All the same, if the doctrine did pass into abeyance this would be a very significant development; far more so than what has happened about usury; for it would directly affect the lives of so many million lay people—*merely by default*.

So let us look at the traditional teaching. What it requires married Catholics to endure have come to appear, in the ethos of our time, intolerable hardships. Even to *risk* these burdens now seems unacceptable, because the risk is avoidable. The

risk might come to nothing, and what in advance looked so dreadful might prove tolerable, even happy. But if you accept the teaching then you accept the risk and then endure what comes even if it is very hard. For the teaching is: You turn copulation into a wrong and shameful act if before or during or after the act you do something that you suppose destroys the possibility of conception and do this in order to destroy that possibility.

It is clear enough *what* is supposed to be wrong and shameful here. But in expounding this idea people have run into difficulties: have set it forth poorly, and on poor grounds, and surrounded with irrelevant complications.

The ground for counting such an act wrong and shameful was formerly that it was not an act of natural intercourse. Following St. Thomas, one might define as "sins against nature" complete sexual acts which deviate from complete acts of ordinary intercourse: these latter are acts intrinsically apt for generation. If someone tried to avoid conception by using a *vas indebitum* in copulation, the act would obviously fall under St. Thomas's definition; and the typical male contraceptive methods can also be seen to have a like character. But there are several female contraceptive methods which are different; here, the acts remain intrinsically apt for generation, physically speaking, and are made not to be apt for it only by incidental circumstances.

I must here explain a little further these concepts of an act's intrinsic character and of the character it has by incidental circumstances. In order to be an intrinsically generative *sort* of act, an act need not *itself* be actually generative; any more than an acorn needs to produce an actual oak tree in order to be an acorn. (In fact most acorns never produce oaks, and most copulations produce no offspring.) When we characterize something as an acorn we are looking to a wider context than can be seen in the acorn itself. Acorns come from oaks, and oaks come from acorns; an acorn is thus *as such generative* (of an oak), whether or not it does generate an oak; this is still true if it is planted in infertile ground or left on a shelf so that it cannot

develop into an oak tree. In the same way, we may say that eating is intrinsically nutritive, the eye as such an organ of sight; consider how we would identify eating or the eye from one species to another. And it is in this sense that copulation is intrinsically generative—though there are very many copulations which in fact do not generate.

Now no theologian would have condemned copulations in which a woman found herself by process of nature in such a condition as *female* contraceptive procedures produce by art; for such copulations would still have been intrinsically of a generative type, although by further circumstance the semen would perish fruitlessly. On the other hand, whatever contraceptive devices are used, the intention in contraceptive intercourse seems to be the same, and it seems ridiculous to draw a line between methods unless indeed the sexual act itself is very deviant in kind.

We may think that some sex acts are to be excluded whatever the intention, but just for that reason it is not for anti-conceptual intent that they are excluded. The kind of acts I mean is indeed definable by this characteristic: their immediate pattern as human sexual acts is *as such* non-procreative. But if acts *not* of an inherently non-procreative kind are non-procreative in virtue of further circumstances, then surely *only* the anti-conceptual intent could be objectionable; and this in itself is *not* regarded as vitiating acts of intercourse, if use of the “safe period” is permitted.

If this line of thought is carried further, individual acts of contraceptive intercourse will not be objectionable, unless indeed they can be characterized as acts of unnatural vice. Such a characterization becomes more and more forced as we progress through the various methods up to the pill. And there may be further developments: it could be that in the future infertility could be secured by keeping certain chemical substances out of one's diet!

Should we not therefore cease to speak of sins against nature, if we are concerned with the ordinary copulations of married people? We may feel that this talk does not make sense; that

somehow in this century theologians had painted themselves into a corner like an imprudent house decorator. But in teaching that people may use infertile periods to avoid conception, the Church is allowing what would formerly have been condemned; the austere and grudging attitude of older authors towards sex has already been abandoned in the modern Church. Thus, though it would indeed be a development of teaching to allow artificial contraception, it is arguable that what is central to that development has already taken its place in the Church's teaching and practice. We can no longer judge by the former standards; we must rather consider such things as motives, attitudes, objectives, and the general role of sexuality in people's lives.

I have sketched this contention; but I think, and shall try to show, that it is philosophically incorrect. The old general position of the moral theologians is, I think, coherent enough: only it is badly presented, without a true rationale. The difficulty for the old position arose, as we saw, from the following question: How can procedures be bad if they render copulation non-generative only by a change of the circumstances surrounding an act intrinsically generative in kind? And this question splits up into two: What characteristic of artificially contraceptive sexual acts was supposed to be condemnable?, and: What makes this characteristic a condemnable one?

The answer to the first question is: *Considered as intentional actions*, artificially contraceptive acts of intercourse *are* intrinsically unapt for generation. It is true that *just considered physically* they may be acts of an intrinsically generative type; but since the physical circumstances that make the acts in the concrete case non-generative, are produced on purpose by the agent so that they may be non-generative, they cannot be considered intrinsically generative *as intentional actions*.

The point I am making here is a general one about act and intention. We always need to distinguish the intention *embodied in* an action from the further intentions *with* which the action is done; I am here concerned only with the former. Whatever ulterior intentions you may or may not have, the question first arises: What intention is inherent in the action you are actually

performing? It is one thing to have or not have certain further intentions, another to modify the intentional action you in fact perform. What concerns us is the question: What are you here and now doing on purpose—whatever your ulterior aims?

Acts that are pretty clearly defined biological events, like eating and copulation, may be said to be by nature actions of a certain kind. Eating is a useful example to illustrate further the concepts I am using; it is a biological example like copulation, but on the other hand we shall not here be confused by controverted moral judgments. Eating is intrinsically a nutritive act, the sort of act to be nutritive; this would be an essential mark of eating if we wished to identify it in an animal species differing very much from us in structure. Now suppose there is a state of the body in which eating happens to be non-nutritive. (There could of course be acts of eating which, considered in a purely physical way, are *intrinsically* non-nutritive: for example, eating by a severed head artificially kept alive, with the food coming out at the neck.) If someone eats (intentionally or otherwise) at a time when his body happens to be in such a state as prevents nutrition, he is still performing what is intrinsically a nutritive act. But if he purposely brings his body into a nutrition-preventing state, then (1) his *physical act* is intrinsically a nutritive type of act and is only in the circumstances incidentally non-nutritive, but (2) his *intentional action* is intrinsically an action of non-nutritive eating.

All this gives a close analogy to generation and contraception, and should make clear the contrast between type of physical act and type of intentional action. But it would be a mistake to think that eating which is intrinsically non-nutritive (whether in its physical or in its intentional character) is as such a sin against a divinely established order of nature. And the analogous account of what makes contraception wrong is surely just as mistaken.

Disturbance of the order of nature may or may not be licit. I have no time to go into this—I shall just give a few unargued examples. To render a man's eating non-nutritive for a day or two; to install a substitute for lung-breathing by some reversible

operation (with a view to underwater exploration, say); these are unobjectionable interferences with the order of nature. But it is illicit to arrange for conception independent of sexual congress, or to breed two-headed men by some surgery on the embryo. Is it licit to transplant an embryo from its mother's womb to another? Suppose this were possible, and were a means of saving a life? This is clearly a wide field of inquiry, which may become alarmingly practical. But, happily this is not my topic.

I have tried to show that we can set up concepts of act and intentional action which make coherent sense of the line drawn by Catholic theologians between permissible and impermissible sexual actions. But granted that the line can be drawn, why should actions on one side of it be counted permissible and actions on the other side impermissible? Why was the individual sex act, in abstraction from its motive and its place in a pair of lives, reckoned to have any moral significance at all? Everybody will admit that the story does not *end* here—motive and pattern of life are important—but why does it *begin* here? Why, in short, is copulation *not* like eating—as everyone knows it is not?

It is anyhow always important to be clear what sort of intentional act one is performing. Whatever ulterior considerations there may be, I must be doing a sort of intentional act that is acceptable or excusable if I am not to be blameworthy.

But whether an individual act of eating is (say) a piece of greedy behaviour depends entirely on circumstance: and casual eating is harmless—you see a mushroom in a meadow as you walk by, and you pick and eat it without shame or shamelessness.

There is a deep association between sex and shame. No one will deny this: some may think it culture-bound, and that we should try to get away from it. But it is bound to too many cultures for that to be credible.

This shame is not a mark of any sort of disgracefulness. It is there in such bashfulness as especially exists between new lovers, new to sexual love, however innocent their union. This

bashfulness shows that what is in question is not just the hiddenness of great intimacy—for bashfulness is between the pair.

This shame in our consciousness shows its face to the world partly in a characteristic mask, in sex being the subject of laughter.

This is a mysterious matter: I assume that it stems from the fall. Shame is a matter of nature, not of culture or personal fault: but surely, of flawed nature. It is not merely that individuals springing from a tainted stock have this or that tendency to evil doing which we may see in the state of the world, or in our own hearts; but also, the acts concerned with the stock itself bring shame. For no cause at all, seemingly; ought not shame to be connected only with what is shameful, disgraceful? But it occurs, as it were senselessly; yet flout it, and you get the shameless. This does not show that there was reason for the shame after all, but only that the reasonless shame has to be respected.

In any sexual activity that is wrong and pursued for its own sake, shamelessness gives the sin the peculiar flavor of lasciviousness (we may recall that the Cambridge philosopher Moore, in his *Principia Ethica*, counted lasciviousness along with cruelty as self-evidently a great intrinsic evil). Not all sexual sin has this flavor; people who in romantic love act irresponsibly and passionately and lose self-control are not properly called lascivious; this is the attractiveness of romantic love, even if it flouts wisdom and justice—sensuality is only round the corner, not yet in command.

But sensuality *is* in command in wrongful sexual actions such as almost everybody commits who lives through his or her prime: and there may be such acts even within marriage, though the blame may be small. And here we come up against a doctrine that has been constantly taught: the copulation of married couples “purely for pleasure” is a sin against chastity, though the least of such sins. What does “purely for pleasure” mean? Obviously a couple who are aiming at getting a child do not copulate “purely for pleasure”; but suppose they are rendering the marriage debt? Intercourse is a normal part of married life;

and the most usual intent is simply to perform the act, with no further aims in view. If there is nothing against an act so performed, it will be a rendering of the debt; but such acts will take place when sensual desire prompts; and sensual desire is for intercourse as pleasurable. The vague way people formerly wrote might suggest that intercourse thus prompted by sensual desire was "purely for pleasure," and so at least venially sinful. Rightly or wrongly ascribed to St. Augustine, the view would be that when "the debt" is rendered and a child is not aimed at, at least one partner is a bit sinful—the one whose desire sets things going in the first place.

This view we repudiate; there has clearly here been an at least inchoate development of doctrine in morals. The view suggests that the only virtuous state of mind is an unwillingness to respond to any feelings of sensual desire in oneself unless one is hoping for a child—even then, one should respond only to the extent that is necessary to perform the act. But we ought rather to say that an act of intercourse occurring as part of married life is an exercise of the virtue of chastity unless something prevents it from being so.

Catholic tradition, even at its most "gloomy, bigoted, and ferocious," has never taught that copulation is a bad kind of act: as St. Augustine says, how could it be when it is the source of human society? But neither is it traditional or in itself reasonable, to regard copulation as an indifferent kind of action, like picking up a stone. Rather, copulation, like eating, is of itself a good kind of action, since like eating it preserves human life. (Our faith, which champions human nature despite the dismal results of its corruption, arms us against the temptation to deny that sustaining human existence is of itself good.) So one individual act of eating or copulation can be bad only because there is something special about it that makes it bad: normally intercourse is morally good simply as a part of married life—it is a chaste act, and an act of the virtue of chastity in one who possesses that virtue.

A severe morality holds that intercourse is vitiated if it is done without *being required* for that preservation of human

kind which makes intercourse a good *sort* of action. This view is generated out of a noble love of austerity by a faulty moral psychology. God gave us our sensitive appetite, and its arousal without our calculation is part of the working of our life. The ancient moralists were right to prescribe moderation; but given moderation, acts prompted by sensuous inclination can usually be left to accomplish what makes them good in kind, without our having to calculate how to accomplish this; in the absence of something special that makes them bad, such acts are good simply as acts of a certain kind, regardless of whether they are *individually* necessary or useful for the end that makes them a good kind of actions. Regular performance of such actions in this way is normal living, the normal way of preserving human existence.

Thus intercourse elicited by spontaneous sensual desire, although this is desire for pleasure, is not therefore done "purely for pleasure," and not therefore bad. For the act is not a blind animal response, but an act of the whole human being who may rightly and reasonably be willing to respond to sensual promptings. When that is so, the act is one governed by a reasonable mind, even if no considering or reasoning goes on at the time; and it is false to say that sensuality is in command or that the act is done purely for pleasure. St. Thomas's doctrine is at this point faulty and confused. He imagines un fallen man as having had sexual desire under his control in the sense that it would arise only when man summoned it up, upon a calculation that it will now be possible and good for him to procreate. And he regards the present lack of such domination by reason, and the abeyance of reason during the sex act, as marks of fallen nature. But there is no such trouble about eating as about sex, although hunger arises spontaneously, not summoned up by reason; and St. Thomas himself sometimes acknowledges that there need be nothing wrong with deliberately letting reason go into abeyance, giving over considering and calculating—or else we could never rightly choose to go to sleep! But sometimes he displays an over-narrow conception of reason in command. A man does not need to be thinking "This is my wife, and

so . . ." in order that his seeking intercourse with her may count as seeking it *because* they are married and as part of their marriage.

All the same, there is such a thing in marriage as intercourse "purely for pleasure"; and Christian tradition as a whole condemns this. Some marks of "being purely for pleasure" would be: immoderation in, or preoccupation with sexual pleasures; succumbing to desire against wisdom; insisting against the *serious* reluctance of the other partner (the qualification is needed because of some facts of male and female psychology). In all these cases but the last both parties may be heartily consenting.

The presence of a positive intent of not procreating when desire leads to intercourse is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for this form of unchastity, but must raise the suspicion of it. We should notice that the intention here under discussion is not the intention already described in describing an intentional action, but is a further intention with which the action is performed. Now it is impossible (given that one knows how uncertain the result is) to copulate with the intention of procreating in this very act; at most one can engage in intercourse over a period with the intention of procreating, if both parties are fertile so far as they know. When they know procreation is naturally impossible (during pregnancy, or late in life, or because they are certainly sterile) they cannot either intend to procreate or intend not to procreate.

A man who wanted to have intercourse without the risk of children might deliberately marry a woman past childbearing or seek out a sterile woman. No marriage law could forbid this; laws have to be clearcut and not allow loopholes, and could not therefore be framed to forbid a class of marriages defined this way by their motive (a motive that of course need not be there when a man marries a woman known to be incapable of child-bearing). But conscience should forbid such a marriage—not every legal marriage, obviously, is morally blameless—and such a man could not have intercourse chastely unless he repented (which, as King Claudius knew, may be none too easy when you

enjoy the fruits of sin). But such a man is not copulating with the intent not to procreate—for the procreation he doesn't want is known by him to be impossible. All the same, failing repentance, the marriage though valid, is on his side a concubinage.

But a marriage in which the intention is to enjoy intercourse and always avoid children is invalid, not merely unchaste like the case just considered. It would not make any difference if the method of avoidance were merely regular use of infertile times: marriage contracted on this policy with a woman whose infertile time was sharply defined would be no marriage at all. We are often told that St. Augustine condemned the safe period. It is not true; he condemned the Manichean practice of seeking to avoid children altogether, by using infertile times, contraceptives, and sterilants; and we ought to condemn this too. For a number of reasons, he never considered the use of infertile times to *limit* conceptions.

I have heard that confessors' advice to young engaged couples has recently changed; that people are no longer counselled not to marry if they have the idea of marrying and having intercourse but avoiding children for some years by reason of poverty. This change appears to me to be a corruption, if the advice now given is supposed to give a guide line that can in general be safely followed.

For a long time up till recently moral theologians were preoccupied with the question what specific kinds of action are allowable, in the sense that a man who will do them need not consider himself *ipso facto* excluded from the sacraments. No doubt the aim was to avoid driving people out of the Church. "We want to make money in such-and-such ways, take such-and-such courses of action against one another, do this and that to maintain our position in the world or keep our job: can we consider this to be no sin?" The moral theologian would see if we could. But if this is the growing point of moral theology, then moral theology is developing unhealthily; for such questions are peripheral, and only if they are seen as peripheral can they be intelligently answered. One thing central to moral theol-

ogy ought to be a sound philosophy of act and intention, which would have to bring this subject matter into connection with the total orientation of a human life and with the virtuous and vicious habits of human beings. For the actions and decisions that are characteristic of a virtue need not be severally obligatory, for a man in whom they are notably lacking to be a bad man.

Again, if these questions are wrongly treated as central, then moral unsoundness results—members of the Church, both clergy and laity, will in general have been getting poor moral instruction and will thus be at best enfeebled. Moreover, now that people feel dissatisfied and attempt a more positive account of morals, they tend to become mushy.

This is why in the field of sexuality we have been given, on the one hand, a set of rules about what sorts of acts may or may not be done; on the other, a lot of slush about love and family life. What *should* be is presented either in terms of specific acts that are not sinful as such, or in a sentimental picture.

One way of looking at the Church's ethical teaching about sex might be summarized as follows: Outside marriage, sexual acts are simply excluded; within marriage, spouses may always use their rights (except, for example, during illness); these rights of spouses over one another's bodies are, as St. Paul teaches, equal and mutual. But this sounds dry, negative, even heartless, so we attempt something more positive in the way of praising the married state and conjugal love. "Marriage is a sacrament, symbolizing the bond of Christ and the Church, and the married state a vocation; aided by grace, the Christian pair build up their Christian life together and grow in mutual love and knowledge. Their physical union plays an integral part in their growth in sanctified love." This sounds all right, but we must ask what is meant by "love": being in love?, natural conjugal affection? Either of these may be lacking or only one-sided. If a kind of love cannot be commanded, then we cannot build our moral theology of marriage on the presumption that it will be present; its not being present is sad, but this sadness exists; it is very common. We must avoid speaking and writing in the

sort of indicative mood that is used in the Scout Law: "A Boy Scout is kind to animals. A Boy Scout is pure in thought, word, and deed." When I read "A Christian husband and wife grow in grace and love together," my first thought is: What if they do not? It would clear the air if we substituted for the sweetness of a rosy picture the bite of a precept: "The commandment to a Christian pair is: Grow in grace and love together." Then we should be in less danger of simply taking for granted that the pleasant affection which obtains between a lucky and congenial couple is already proof that the precept has been fulfilled. Where such wonderful good fortune is present, there will be the question "Are we fulfilling this precept?", no less than for a less lucky pair. The precept, as I stated it, is a joint one; a joint precept can only be obeyed in common. So the answer may have to be no: yet then there remain the separate precepts to each, and in an irremediably unhappy marriage one ought still to love the other, though the common precept cannot be obeyed, and though he does not feel the sort of affection which cannot be commanded, and which is simply good fortune.

But for such couples what application is there for the frequent description of sexual intercourse as "justified not merely for procreation but by its part in married life, as an expression of mutual love, tenderness, affection, and respect"? Are we to infer that people who are unlucky in their married life ought to abstain from intercourse? Perhaps not: people who write in this style are not, I believe, so consequent in their thinking. Clearly there are many marriages which are imperfectly happy by reason of uncongeniality but are sustained in being by habit and loyalty to the marriage bond; sexual intercourse plays a significant part in sustaining such marriages. Teaching about marriage ought absolutely not to be irrelevant to the unhappy, and flattering to the lucky. Thus the old vindication of intercourse as "rendering the marriage debt," which many find repellent nowadays, is more realistic than they are; it makes no assumption as to the state of the affections.

But if we adopt that Pauline way of talking about equal claims, then on the face of it the cards are heavily stacked in

favor of female submissiveness and husbands' freedom to copulate when they want to. This is the natural consequence of the male role in sexuality (I do not mean that sexual desire is specially male). To redress this inequality, perhaps, people rather hesitantly mix in with their praise of marriage some praise of "restraint and self-control": it is very unclear what they mean. Are restraint and self-control, on both sides, praiseworthy as freely chosen austerity? Or are they, while praiseworthy, also obligatory as a form of moderation? If both sides experience desire, is abstinence praiseworthy or not? Is it perhaps as considerateness that abstinence is praiseworthy or obligatory, so that it is not virtuous moderation when considerateness does not demand it?

It is sometimes assumed that when the "debt" is paid this is because the other partner demands it, and that partner's motive cannot itself be "paying the debt." I think this is wrong. When St. Augustine depicts holy people forsaking the flesh when procreation is no longer in view, he may be assuming (though I cannot confidently accuse him of this) that when procreation is not in view desire and pleasure *must* be the ruling motive; but I think this is false, though the motive is likely enough. For whereas Augustine's holy couple have developed a bond of charity so strong as to sustain the marriage by itself and not to need to be helped by intercourse, there are very many people, not ruled by fleshly desire, who while acknowledging and admiring this austerity and holiness could not soberly judge that they themselves had already reached such a level of charity.

If moderation and considerateness are the reasons offered for abstention from sexual intercourse, is such abstention praiseworthy at all for people who are little inclined to be sexually immoderate or inconsiderate? The air was clearer, I think, when abstinence was prescribed by special rules for certain occasions —in preparation for sacraments and at specially holy or penitential seasons. These regulations are apt to puzzle us now: they seem to express that negative attitude towards sex which we now repudiate. But the idea was surely the same one as

underlies periodic fasting and abstinence from some foods: religious embrace a harder discipline, but the laity too had some discipline of temporarily going without pleasures and good things.

The vestiges of the fasting and abstinence disciplines that are still with us are trivial, and it may be good if they are swept away and the management of a Christian life is left to the individual's judgement. Certainly it would not add up to much of a Christian life if one had observed these disciplines and avoided all *species* of acts that moral theologians could not find a way of allowing; particularly if one's almsgiving were the minimum ever reckoned necessary; for one's life might all the same be full of worldliness, injustice, and avarice. So it may be good if the last of these regulations disappear. But the leaven of the Spirit that always works within the Church—even if it seems not much at work in this way in the present—is bound to show itself some time in a renewed vitality of ascetical ideals and practices. What form these will take we cannot say.

For myself, I should have thought it very difficult for people to make and stick to private rules, with the sort of force New Year's resolutions have: For people who want to strengthen themselves by ascetic training periods, definite known rules appear better than hand-to-mouth attempts to embody some general idea that "restraint and self-control" is good—perhaps in a context of anxiety about births!

If the relaxation or abandonment of regulations is seen as a lowering of the price of Christianity, it is profoundly ill-conceived. Some clergy, sensitive to modern trends, seem to have been scared into flattering us in our worldliness, our sensuality, and our insistence that things must go well for us. But what may in the future become a recognized ideal is that a devout and like-minded couple should for ascetical reasons arrange to practice sexual abstinence for short periods. This plan is like a slap in the face for *l'homme moyen sensuel*, so it is not likely to be commonly adopted; but so far as I know, in spite of St. Paul's authority, this is not at present commonly envisaged even as an ideal plan.

People who followed this plan would be showing that they didn't regard marriage as a license (for some reason, the only one available) to sail on the happy sea of sex—accepting children when they are an earthly blessing—though, alas, the voyage may land you on the rocks of hardship. "But Christians don't regard marriage like that!" I shall be told. "Marriage is a vocation!" What does that mean? Marriage after all—though so often unhappy—is regarded by the world as an obviously desirable state; it is the most common form of life for mankind; then, what makes it a vocation, a special calling? Three things I suggest: absolute commitment by indissoluble vows to this person alone so long as you both live; the work essential to be done for any children there may be; and the abandonment of the claim that one's own will shall dictate which path one takes from among those that offer themselves.

There is a certain ambiguity about this last token of a matrimonial vocation. St. Paul tells us, in a drily factual way, that a husband seeks to please his wife, and a wife her husband, rather than the Lord (that is why it is better not to marry). This description perfectly fits most "successful" marriages; and if it fits, it is inappropriate to speak of such a life as a vocation—many lay people must surely feel embarrassingly flattered by the word. There is indeed perhaps this much of a title to claim to be pursuing a vocation: that we are committed to, and possibly engaged in, the work of bringing up any children we may have in Christian faith and practice. But upon the whole we enter upon marriage to please ourselves, not as people entering upon a vocation; and within the framework of the commitment and task we have, surely only for very few of us is the rule of life in a marriage that is reasonably happy anything but a pleasing of ourselves and one another. Surely this is the ground for placing marriage second to religious virginity or widowhood: that we have not set the scene with a view to prayer and contemplation and the service of God as our principal concern. This does not mean that we have chosen something bad instead of something good; and the commitment by vow and (if it comes) the task of educating children do something to justify

the talk of vocation; in any event, it is a vocation to be a Christian, married or not—and this *is* called a vocation in Scripture, as marriage is not.

If we really meant that marriage as such is a vocation, then we should be counseling lots of people against it. Really entering into marriage as into a vocation would mean a firm determination that for *this* marriage it shall *not* be true that the husband seeks to please his wife, and the wife her husband, rather than to please the Lord; and one might then question whether one had this vocation, if this were the idea one had in mind—and might not *want* to get married as much as many people in the world do. For it is one good thing about the West that there are various possible ways of life, so that the unmarried do not stick out like sore thumbs. People fairly often assume that at least for a woman it is a poor thing not to get married; but we should rather propagate St. Paul's warning: "Let her marry if she must, but I think she will have trouble in the flesh."

Upon the whole, Christian people neither get married with a sense of *such* a vocation nor stay unmarried because they feel the lack of it; they marry because they want to, because they must; moreover, they fear loneliness, for it is also unusual in the West for unmarried people living in the world to have much community life—the married hive off in boxes, in small family units that exclude outsiders. So people must and will marry; but that doesn't make their marriage a vocation. Having married because you must, you may well accept, as one accepts a vocation, the Christian conditions of indissoluble vows and the work of rearing a family in Christian life. St. Jerome's estimate is just: this is only rye bread, as compared with the fine wheat bread of the religious life—and the dung of fornication.

It is the common vocation of any Christian, married or not, to choose to please God rather than man; but I'd rather not be told that I am pursuing this vocation when I seek the comfort and success of myself and my family. Whether I am pursuing it at all depends on whether I'm ready to give all that up immediately, as Sir Thomas More did, if it hindered the submission of my

will to God's. And if, in their marriages, people are not actually giving anything up? You may be sure, even if the emergency never arises, that So-and-so loves his child more than his bank account, that he would empty his bank account for his child. But unless So-and-so already practises some asceticism about possessions, it is by no means so certain that, though it has never come to a test, he loves God more than his possessions.

This is closer to our main topic than it may appear. In Ephesians 5 St. Paul condemns both lechery and *pleonexia*—greediness—as vices that shut men out from the kingdom of God; either is “a worship of idols.” And Christian asceticism always relates to the use of both sex and wealth, and regards as the most perfect act the act of martyrdom in which life itself is lost.

I have tried to sketch a background view of marriage against which we may look at our unanswered question: What, if anything, is bad about acts of contraceptive intercourse? As we saw, such acts are as intentional actions (though not necessarily as physical procedures) in themselves of a kind unapt for generation. But what is wrong about them as thus described?

St. Thomas replies: the order of nature is disturbed in a matter where what is done concerns the good of the species. But suppose that in the course of caring for their bit of the species—their children—a couple “disturb the order of nature,” why may they not? The point of sex is indeed the production of children, but its use is necessary for the well-being of the parents beyond what is desirable for procreation; may we not then argue that contraceptive intercourse is compatible with a chaste marriage? A parallel that might be offered is the case of property: the goods of the earth are there to supply human needs, and superfluities in what each man owns are for the relief of other people's needs, but in the normal situation it is each man's business to see to the disposal of his own superfluity and not the business of other private people to take it (*Summa Theol.*, IIa IIae, q. 66, art. 7).

Against this, I think one could formulate the rationale of the old objection as follows: In contraceptive intercourse the in-

tentional action is deliberately altered from being a generative kind of action to being an act of attaining sexual climax. This account of what the intentional act here is ought, I think, to be accepted, whether we approve of such an act or not. For it is not a question of the further purpose or intention with which the act is done—to foster the well-being of the parents, sustain their love, etc.—but of what the intentional act itself is: namely, the couple's use of one another's bodies, no longer to perform a generative type of act, but for one or both to achieve orgasm.

If it is indeed all right to do this for good ends, then it is excessively difficult to see *why* after all the act need closely resemble a normal complete act of copulation; supposing that to have been made very difficult, say by a crippling accident to the wife, why should the couple not achieve sexual climax by mutual stimulation, rather than hold themselves obliged to a heroic degree of continence?

## 23.

# RENEWAL OF THE DOCTRINE OF MAN

CHARLES MŒLLER

## INTRODUCTION

### *1. From DuBos to Teilhard: Renewal of Christian Anthropology*

Charles DuBos often remarked that what the modern world needed most was a new treatise on the soul, an updated *De Anima*. He also said time and again that what characterized contemporary man was retreat before the transcendent.

He himself, by a complicated route, had progressively discovered at the center of artistic experience a ray refracted from the burning and luminous divine hearth. He had been struck by St. Augustine's phrase, "*intimior intimo meo*," "God more intimate to myself than I am." He saw in the words of Claudel, "Someone who is in myself more myself than I," an acceptable translation of that Augustinian vision. "*In interiore hominem redi: ibi habitat Deus*." "Turn back to the inner man: there is where God dwells." These words sum up the route to be followed by modern man.

DuBos wrote several pages of this new *De Anima*. In his *Du spirituel dans l'ordre littéraire*, for instance, he revealed, through Shelley, Maurice de Guérin, Wordsworth, certain aspects of the soul: living breath, weakness and strength, vast

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feeling, experience of the absolute hidden within the sensible. In his *Approximations sur Goethe* he has wonderfully delineated "the soul-action" which characterized more and more the humanism of the author of the second *Faust*.

DuBos died in 1939. His work is little known at present except among his enthusiasts. Today we would generally say that what we need most is not a *De Anima* but a *De homine*, a new treatise on man. We mistrust interiority; we would see in it an ambiguous region, a possible center of mystification and evasion. It is enough to read the pages of Sartre devoted to the criticism of interiority—small, cosy, tepid place, he says, where we absorb external reality, digest it, make it our own—in order to grasp, even though it be by rather facile simplifications, a new approach to existence and man. "The humanist" in *La Nausée* is a man of bad faith. Whereas for DuBos literature should usher life into the heaven of the fixed stars, make it open to the eternal, immutable values with which it is pregnant, for Sartre literature should "seize upon liberties caught in a trap." Entirely different from the grasp of "remembered time" in the passing moment, man must catch the concrete condition in which he is cold or hungry or fearful, an enemy one to another, or an accomplice and friend, but never in an atmosphere of rest and peace. Instead of a refined interior, which DuBos never tired of minutely describing in his *Journal*, we must observe Roquentin, sad, discussing vague ideas, wandering along the dark boulevard, along the station in Bouville, and very quickly losing himself, two steps from the lights of the living, in a kind of no man's land of earth and filth, darkness and danger.

Teilhard de Chardin placed in the center of his approach man in the cosmos, rooted in a history, tied to other men, face to face with a concrete condition, and responsible for the human adventure,—a little like the characters of Claudel, who have need, like a tree, of the immensity of heaven and the depth of the earth in order to stand upright. Man according to Teilhard is the center and also the agent of the cosmic adventure which leads humanity towards a complex unity, built of tension and love, of fall and conquest, towards the "noosphere."

## 2. Anthropology and Theology

It is not a question here of knowing who is right or wrong. What matters is to be conscious of these factual data, of these two periods of cultural history of modern man. The first thing to do is to listen, record, try to understand. It is to man, in flesh and bones, with his greatnesses and his weaknesses, his enthusiasms and his whims, that the Gospel must be preached.

Clearly, we need a *De Anima*, and it would be very sad if we gave up the analyses and studies of the vast domain of the inner life. We have only to consider the writings of the authentic mystics that Bergson analyzed so well to see that we have scarcely begun to explore this world of man living in God. We are about at the stage of the man who still had only opera glasses to study the galaxies!

It is still true that what modern man fears most is transcendence. In this regard the words of DuBos are as pertinent today as they were thirty years ago. The route of this transcendence is undoubtedly different, but the urgency of a re-education—as we relearn to walk after a fracture—is evident.

Nevertheless, the fact is clear that we must recapture awareness of certain aspects of the doctrine of man through new data, which we like to qualify as “existentialist.” In recent years, with the discovery of the Semitic background of Christian tradition, with the rise of phenomenology and the social sciences, there has emerged a new vision of man. Theology has become aware of it and is concerned in its turn to unify these aspects.

In a more general and also more radical way we must emphasize at the present time an essential link between anthropology and theology. Karl Rahner has recently devoted a whole study to this aspect.<sup>1</sup>

Anthropology is a theological “place”: we cannot say any-

<sup>1</sup> *Mysterium salutis*, vol. 2 of *Die Heilsgeschichte vor Christus*, Zurich, 1967, contains a series of remarkable studies on anthropology. I am quoting from “Grundsätzliche Überlegungen zur Anthropologie im Rahmen der Theologie” in that volume, pp. 415–419.

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thing about God, the formal object of theology, without also speaking of man, and vice versa. Man indeed is not a thing but a person. So there is no contradiction here with the "theocentric" aspect of theology. Pope Paul VI in the concluding address of the Council said: "The Church of the Council is turned towards man, but that does not mean that it is giving way to anthropocentrism, quite the reverse."<sup>2</sup>

We must even go further. We must speak of a transcendental anthropological dimension of theology. Theology indeed is *Heilstheologie*, theology of salvation, and salvation is the salvation of man. This salvation is God, the God-Trinity. Christ is grace—at least its source and its terminus. Christ cannot be known without also grasping in faith the Holy Spirit—it is the Spirit, moreover, who allows us to profess, to confess, our faith in Christ—, without unceasingly rediscovering in this movement which leads to the Principle without principle, the Father. But all this cannot be understood except in the function of a transcendent anthropology, of a subject—grace, to repeat, is not a thing but a "person," in this sense that it comes from Christ and leads us to him.

There are, moreover, *apologetic* reasons for this essential link between anthropology and theology. The whole of theology needs, Rahner also says, this transcendental anthropological turn. It must discover the strict bond between the contents of dogmatic affirmations and the correct understanding of man. There is a crucial situation here that marks an era.

All this implies some *consequences*, above all in two orders. That of *Christology*. The fact of the incarnation allows us to say that man, by his original definition, is the "possible-being-other" (*das Mögliche Anders sein der Selbstentäußerung Gottes*) and the "possible brother of Christ." In a sense the incarnation is what God "becomes" when he divests himself according to the dimension of another than himself. Moreover, there is a link between "theological anthropology" and "protology." In Christ the adequate "protology" is also an eschatology; in other words,

<sup>2</sup> See official edition, *Constitutiones, Decreta, Declarationes*, Rome, 1966, p. 1065.

in Jesus appears what man is and what he ought to be. The doctrine of the creation of man is a moment of protology; there is there at once the uniqueness of the event and the explanation of the present situation beginning with the "past" (atiology).

The point is clear: in a sense anthropology is no longer a part of theology; it is theology itself according to its profound dimension of teaching about the God of salvation.

## I. CULTURAL DATA AND THEOLOGICAL ELUCIDATION

### *1. Defunct Existentialism?*

a. The primary cultural datum with which to begin reflection on Christian anthropology is that of the *existential approach*. We do not say "existentialist," for this term denotes a region of philosophical systematization, whereas what we are here concerned with is a global approach to reality.

We have already described several aspects of this approach when speaking of "freedoms caught in a trap," which literature should unveil. In this perspective we no longer speak of "human nature" but of the "human condition." The words have become a kind of slogan since the publication of Malraux's novel in 1933, *La condition humaine*. The book's contents—the disavowal and failure of the revolution in Shanghai, according to the order of the Marxist party itself—indicates well enough the "tragic" context in which the theme makes its appearance in the cultural climate. The humanism of happiness, as described by André Rousseau, presupposes a solidly constructed house; it's a question then of making life more human, the house more beautiful, for instance by placing in it tapestries, furniture, and pictures. In the humanism of salvation, on the contrary, the house is on fire. The question arises whether it will be possible for man, for a mass of men, simply to live, to survive. The house is burning—there is no more quibbling about the color of the carpets; the firemen must be called

to save whoever can still be saved. The two-thirds of humanity who do not have the essential minimum, who are threatened with death, or worse still with a sub-human life, without concrete possibilities of cultivating themselves, constitute the only model by means of which the problem of man can be raised. The human condition: these are the exhausted workers in the rice fields, the women who begin again and again the same work of "putting things in order," of caring for the living and the dead under torrid skies or in icy expanses. We are far from the sage who, like Montaigne, observes, reflects, reads in his library, in his ivory tower, from whose height, as from "untroubled temples of wisdom" he can observe those who are still floundering in the waves of the raging sea.

b. It is not a matter of changing the truths of faith but of presenting them in a *language accessible* to each generation. "While adhering to the methods and requirements proper to theology, theologians are invited to seek continually for more suitable ways of communicating doctrine to the men of our times. For the deposit of faith or revealed truths are one thing; the manner in which they are formulated without violence to their meaning and significance is another" (*Gaudium et spes*, art. 62).

In this perspective Christian anthropology of these latter years has emphasized the aspect of *human condition* rather than the more abstract one of "human nature." Speaking of the incarnation, many have emphasized the meaning of the words of St. John's Prologue "The Word was made flesh." They have seen in it that the Word of God has put on the human condition, has assumed it, made it his own under the sign of uncertainty, of fragility. In this same line, it immediately appeared that the suffering, death, burial of Christ reveal as a visible whole that totality of the human condition. Man in fact is *zum Tode*, as Heidegger so often said; Christ would not be complete man if he had not also taken on death.

It is also understandable why theologians are preoccupied with revealing man embedded in history, responsible for himself and for others. What existential thought calls "incarna-

tion"—signifying simply that man is necessarily "situated," embedded, conditioned by the contingency that marks his being—is elucidated by the Christian perspective: it speaks in this connection apropos of man, of the condition of *creature*. Also, the "existentials," that is to say, these absolutely universal "equations" of the human condition, such as having a body, being rooted in space and time, being subject to death, not being able "to be oneself" without constant reference to the other in "intersubjectivity"—these "existentials," these situations equally inevitable but variable according to individuals, such as being sick or well, beautiful or ugly, rich or poor, and so forth,<sup>3</sup> take on a more profound "meaning" in the light of theological anthropology.

But at the same time, theology, recalling that God has placed man in the hands of his own counsel (*Ecclesiasticus*), emphasizes freedom and responsibility. The bonds of intersubjectivity are clarified: they are the visible face of that vocation to truth and the love of the other which is expressed in the commandment of the love of neighbor, and is made concrete in the parable of Jesus, who said that what you have done to the least of your brethren, you have done to himself.

c. I have wondered if we should not speak of "defunct existentialism." In fact, the existentialist craze has passed. As Bultmann has become the Kant of theology, that is to say, a thinker whose critical method cannot be ignored but whose system no one any longer adopts in its entirety, so existentialism is henceforth one of the important philosophies of our time, but no longer the dominant one. It would be unfortunate and curious for theologians to continue to be concerned with existentialism, asking if it should not be condemned, while we are moving from it towards structuralism!

Defender of political freedom and of literature as an appeal to freedom, Sartre becomes in the eyes of the structuralists the last of the metaphysicians. For Sartre, to think is necessarily to think for or against history. This latter has a cohesion and

<sup>3</sup> The word "existentials" in these senses has become classical.

a feeling for liberties, and the feeling is irreducible to mythology. What is essential, Sartre repeats, is not what we make of man but what he makes of his condition.<sup>4</sup> In this sense Sartre would be "the last Christian heretic,"<sup>5</sup> still raising problems in terms familiar to theologians.

## 2. Are You a Structuralist?<sup>6</sup>

a. In a sense it is a question of a return, of a kind of revised, expanded "positivism." While the existentialist claimed that man is in history, but that it is he who gives it its meaning, who brings it to its conclusion, a Lévi-Strauss writes that the history of the world began without man and that it will end without him.

Beginning with linguistics, "which gives it its fundamental sociological principle," structuralism shows to what extent man is tied up with sociological, psychological, cultural structures. For Lévi-Strauss and Lacan, for example, "structure is a relation of diverse elements, a whole thanks to which the parts receive a meaning that surpasses their simple juxtaposition. And the structures do not obey consciousness but act behind it in an independent manner. Thus the subject disappears: he is done, as he is spoken (that speaks, says Lacan), as he is thought. It is clear how these sciences cease to be human. Man is a thoroughfare for rules, codes, systems which science brings to light."<sup>7</sup>

A number of passages from "the new novel" elucidate this fundamental situation. In *Moderato cantabile*, by Marguerite Duras, for example, we see the revival of the behavior of others progressively standing out behind the apparently free

<sup>4</sup> P. Watte, "Etes-vous structuraliste?", *Revue Nouvelle*, 45 (1967), 657. I make considerable use of this article.

<sup>5</sup> The expression is from E. Florival to whom I am here indebted.

<sup>6</sup> The heading of this section has been borrowed from the article cited in n. 4 above.

<sup>7</sup> Watte, *art. cit.*, 656.

and responsible behavior of Anne Desvalière. It is by the medium of the tragic love of this woman for the lover whom she has asked to kill her that Anne feels herself attracted to Chauvin. It is not she who loves freely; neither is she "loved." "Something" in her, by her, through her, "loves"; it is that image of the café where the murder of the lover by an unknown man took place, it is this cry of the woman struck in the stomach by the pistol shot which becomes the impersonal and fascinating "medium" which is going to attract her to love Chauvin. Little by little another dimension is unveiled. Beyond this first cycle of eight days, which brought her back each evening to the same place, a second, annual cycle stands out. Beyond this recent fascination another, older one acts upon her —the silent, disparate love of Chauvin for her, placed naked before her during the course of that soirée, of that worldly meal where she discovers the lie of that bourgeois life, at the same time that she becomes sick and drunk. A third depth then comes to light. In that room whose window opens upon a large beech tree that creaks in the night wind, she experiences the giddiness of identical loves felt since time immemorial by other women who have loved.

Here we are perhaps back in the strange world which Michel Butor had described in *La modification*. The hero, between Paris and Rome, is "modified to the extent that, having set out to join in Rome a woman he loves, on arriving at the Termini station he does not even go into the street but sets out again at once for Paris, where his wife, whom he no longer loves, is waiting for him. The whole narrative is in the second person: "Somebody is speaking to you." "You have done this, you have done that . . ." Never does the first person appear to transfer the reader into the I of the narrator, neither is there a third person to allow the reader to share a sort of superior, almost divine knowledge of the secrets of a character, secrets of which the latter is very often ignorant. No, constantly the implacable you operates like an obsession against which you balk but which increasingly hems you in.

Who is this voice saying "you"? Who is this somebody who is

speaking to you? It is neither the "I" of the hero who does not know what he is, neither is it the "I" of the narrator, for nowhere is judgment made on the character, nowhere does there appear a value, an "objective truth." From the beginning we are contained within this equation of which no one knows whence it comes or whither it goes, but which asserts itself. The hero is affected, is spoken, is thought by these structures which act independently behind his consciousness.

In *La modification* the author has made these structures tangible by the image of the train en route from Paris to Dijon. Periodically, the text describes the compartment, the other travellers, the sound of the wheels, the names of the stations being called out in the night. The description is given in such a way that we experience at the same time the feeling of the monotonous, wearisome repetition of the same things and of infinitesimal modifications which are but diachrony, unexplained, commonplace, incidental variations at the heart of a fundamental synchrony.<sup>8</sup> It is the structures that are dominant, immutable, through mutations that are but a new beginning, a momentary divergence from the diachrony before the return to the fundamental synchrony.

The hero of Butor's novel is thus changed, not by a decision but by a sort of mimicry that causes him to react in conformity with the fundamental synchrony. That diachrony constituted by the love of his Roman mistress, that divergence, is reabsorbed and everything finally restored to order. But the order in question here is of course not a universal order manifested in an appeal to consciousness, but a structure, veiled, hidden, which precisely the human sciences unveil.

It is evident that the center of gravity is shifted from consciousness to structures. It is no longer the consciousness described by Husserl as consciousness of, as a responsible opening out to the personal and impersonal world, which is the central point of metaphysics; it is the structures. Henceforth there is no more true history.

<sup>8</sup> Marc Gaboriau in *Esprit*, November, 1963, 586 ff. Another issue of *Esprit* in 1967 was given over to structuralism.

## RENEWAL OF RELIGIOUS STRUCTURES

The force of this view is to bring to light in the interior system of linguistics, in the psychological, sociological, and cultural structures, those sets of relationships, those systems of signs wholly immutable throughout history, the relationship of social customs, whatever their historical situation, to a general system that explains them. Feeling, guided by analysis, does not help towards a better understanding of the subject; it only forecasts the disappearance of the subject. Henceforth, all history, even the history of Christianity as a doctrine of salvation, will be considered as mere mythology, and every interpretation of history will be qualified *a priori* as mythology. In this context, we will speak of the temporary importance attached to man in Western science. The images in which man was conceived are dependent upon the development of the studies of language, natural history, and economy. Today when these images are accounted for by a semiology (the general science of signs) without recourse to hermeneutics, Foucault announces prophetically the death of man, bringing Nietzsche to his logical conclusions. There should be no misunderstanding: what is about to disappear is the awareness of man, just as the death which Nietzsche proclaimed was that of the awareness of God. The mind analyzes *words*, not *things*: man is no longer privileged; he yields precedence to the play of images just as the King disappears in favor of indefinite perspectives in Velasquez' painting "Les Suivantes," an admirable description of which opens the volume.<sup>9</sup>

### 1. STRUCTURALISM AND CHRISTIAN ANTHROPOLOGY

We must begin by recognizing the whole truth revealed by this view of man. If the Christian response to existentialism was to emphasize also, along with the liberty and responsibility of man in history, objective values, truths in themselves, in the case of structuralism prominence no doubt will be given, to counterbalance this, to the liberty of man, to his responsible

<sup>9</sup> Watte, *art. cit.*, 656.

awareness. We will probably be tempted even to regret the passing of that existential philosophy which at least still placed freedom and the responsibility of man at the heart of philosophy. Among certain proponents of it we even found an insistence upon the experience of guilt, which seemed to be a very obvious anticipation of the announcement of the Word of God.

I have already alluded to that temptation which will not be a "futurable." We must recognize, with Jean Lacroix, that "on the whole, without aggressiveness, without provocation, but as though on the level of research, Lévi-Strauss is perhaps in the process of formulating the most rigorously atheistic philosophy of our time." Francis Jeanson speaks of a reification of history.<sup>10</sup>

But before "going into battle" it is necessary to understand and make assumptions. Existentialism had doubtless demonstrated, and often in how obsessive and crude a manner (think of the Sartrean descriptions of "viscosity," of the floundering in vagueness and confusion) the burden of the human condition. The "incarnation" spoken of in the philosophy of Marcel is often confinement in a captivity from which there is no escape. He himself reproached me with not having sufficiently emphasized, in the study that I had devoted to him, "the stridencies" that disturb and soon annul the symphony that men strive to live and that God alone "is."

Whatever we may say, moreover, of the profundity of Sartrean analyses, so far as concerns the wall before which we stand and which nothing can knock down, we cannot deny that there is a permanent temptation in him to a sort of escape into a world "chemically pure" from which have been removed, by drying out, all those muddy, slimy humidities that mark daily life. When Roquentin, at the end of *La nausée*, hears the negro spiritual played back on the record, he experiences a sort of ecstasy: on the threshold of a revelation he discovers a pure world of total liberty in which reality remains at the same time tangible and weightless, at once concrete and plastic. We have only to recall the admirable descriptions of being and nothing-

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 656, n. 5.

ness, on skiing, to grasp, there too, that obsession with touching on reality, but also, while assuming its contours, vanquishing it.<sup>11</sup>

In structuralism there is no longer a way out. "No exit." The implacable, penetrating analyses show to what extent man, even in his conscious, is conditioned by structures that, in a sense, he has not made.

"Conditioned"? The term is not adequate; we must say "captive"; for it is of a real captivity that structuralism speaks to us. And we will not diminish this captivity by saying that they are "going too far," that they are overstepping the bounds, the sound, just measure of "classical restraint."

Biblical revelation does not recognize these academic "dosages," these "happy mediums" of a purely human wisdom. It emphasizes the total "liberty of the children of God" in the "truth of justice and charity, in this freedom which Christ has brought," but it also constantly harks back to the *radical* captivity of man from which *nothing* purely human can deliver him; there are here two affirmations of maximal situations or limits.

More precisely, revelation tells us of that form of captivity which encloses man in the hopeless cycle of the eternal return, in the prison of things. Even more clearly, it is space and time that are revealed as the scene of the most essential captivity.

There is a saying of St. Paul that comes to mind at this point: "We were prisoners of the elements of this world." If, according to its literal meaning, a precise view of the culture of that time is referred to, it has a wider sense. The captivity described by Marguerite Duras in *Moderato cantabile* is of the latter type: that bending back, coiling up again of time, adopting the cycle, eternally turning, of the planetary "space" that is ours, shows how duration, far from becoming the scene of a genesis, of a liberty, of a hope, is on the contrary the photographic enlargement of non-hope, of non-sense. The words of Paul Ricoeur

<sup>11</sup> S. Lilar, *A propos de Sartre et de l'amour*, Paris 1967, pp. 18–66, analyzes this behavior admirably; see especially pp. 57 ff. It should be added that the "later Sartre," (that is, the Sartre beginning with the *Critique of Dialectical Reason*) is not in this line.

to Lévi-Strauss in 1963 could be aptly quoted here: "I should rather think that this implicit philosophy enters into your field of work in which I see an extreme form of modern agnosticism. For you there is no "message"; not in the sense of cybernetics, but in the kerygmatic sense. You are in despair of the meaning; but you are saved by the thought that, if people have nothing to say, at least they say it so well that their speech can be submitted to structuralism. You save meaning, but it is the meaning of non-sense, the admirable syntactical arrangement of a speech that says nothing. I see you at that conjunction of agnosticism and a superintelligence of syntaxes, which makes you both fascinating and disturbing."<sup>12</sup>

Here we must avoid a search "for meaning" that would make little of the profound "non-sense" of the radical captivity of man in structures. I repeat, it will never be sufficiently shown how infinitely more man is involved in things than is imagined. Consider for example the *Planetarium* of Nathalie Sarroue, in which Aunt Bertha's five room apartment and a Louis XV easy-chair play as important a part as the "awarenesses" of the characters. Consider *Tropismes*, by the same author, in which the "artistic" microscope reveals those infinitesimal mutations of profound feeling that are obedient not to consciousness but to those mechanisms which it is precisely the purpose of structuralism to reveal, in order to arrive at a "science of man" in which man, in a sense, disappears. The novel of Claude Simon, *La route des Flandres*, gives in this connection some haunting images of the entanglements of a sexual passion with a war tank, with kaleidoscopically blurred scenes. The purpose of the book is to make tangible the "synchrony," the "non-human" laws which traverse this apparent chaos.

Moreover, we have only to turn to Joyce's masterpiece *Ulysses* to see that one of the meanings of this immense work is also to bring to light these "tropisms," these unconscious, psychological, sociological, visceral, mythical "mechanisms"

<sup>12</sup> *Esprit*, no. 11, 1963, 652-653.

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which "act upon" the "hero," Leopold Bloom. The latter is a scene, a screen, upon which events take place, a small calm on troubled waters, a blurred reflection of consciousness on an interior Sargasso Sea. Now Joyce's object is here also, in that "viciocycloousmonster"<sup>18</sup> to show "all space in a nutshell." All the "Once upon a times," all the legends, myths, and symbols, come together in this "story" that is not a story, for when it "ends" it begins at the first line of the narrative so as to start all over again.

I do not say that Joyce's work is "structuralist." It is too extensive, like that of Proust, to be confined in a system; but it also casts light upon that radical captivity of man.

It is not by chance that the myth of the eternal return reappears regularly in the culture, and especially in the last works of Nietzsche. It is an essential part of them, without which the meaning of the "death of God" cannot be understood. This theme reappears also in the new novel, in certain films of Antonioni, such as *Blow-Up*, and in *Last Year at Marienbad* by Robbe-Grillet Resnais.

Truly man is a prisoner of the elements of this world. The very intelligibility which he discovers in the structures "which act upon him" is even further confirmation of this captivity.

## 2. HERMENEUTICS AND STRUCTURALISM<sup>14</sup>

On the one hand, as we have seen, the extent of captivity in structures can never be exaggerated; but on the other hand, Christian revelation prophetically proclaims liberation from this captivity. Not that salvation consists in flight, in deliverance from the conditions of space and time; salvation is the risen Jesus, in whose humanity we find the world again but transfigured.

<sup>18</sup> The expression, which is Joyce's, refers both to the cycle of eternal return and to G. B. Vico who was its theorician.

<sup>14</sup> Paul Ricoeur has an article with this title in *Esprit*, no. 11, 1963, which is here used.

In other words, it is not by escaping from the real weight of these structures that we will be saved, but through them, by accepting our condition; not by trying to outstrip time but by living the *theologia crucis*.

Paul Ricoeur has grasped this point admirably. Without in fact repudiating anything in Lévi-Strauss's contributions to structuralism, nor the light that he casts on the totemic myths, he questions whether the whole gamut of possible meanings is thereby exhausted. He remarks, indeed, that almost all of Lévi-Strauss's examples are taken from totemism, almost none from the Judeo-Christian tradition. In totemism it is obvious that there is predominance of system over events, but in Hebrew thought there is predominance of event. "Hebrew thought is thought within historic traditions; its principal concern is in the proper combination of traditions and in their theological interpretation. In this method historical reorganization always takes precedence over intellectual and theological reorganization." These words of von Rad inspire Ricoeur to write: "What becomes of the relationships between diachrony and synchrony? One thing has struck me in the great symbols of Hebrew thought that I have been able to study in the *Symbolique du mal* and in myths—those for example of the creation and fall—built on the first symbolic level. These symbols and myths do not exhaust their meaning in homologous arrangements of social dispositions; I do not say that they do not lend themselves to the structural method; I am even convinced of the contrary. I say that the structural method does not exhaust their meaning because their meaning is a reserve of meaning ready to be re-employed in other structures." And he continues, a little further on: "Thus the structural method is much closer to the phenomenon of inertia than to the living reinterpretation that seems to us to characterize true tradition."<sup>15</sup>

In other words, in totemic thought "nothing happens"; there are no occurrences in the proper sense. In other types of thought, that of the Bible, for example, there is, beyond the

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 613–14, 615.

"homologous dispositions" a reinterpreting view which bears on the future. This is what inspires Ricoeur to write these lines: "But if it is true, as the author sometimes admits, that 'even in the vestigial state everything that might evoke totemism seems remarkably absent from the area of the great civilizations of Europe and Asia,' has one the right, at the risk of falling into a totemism of a new kind, to identify primitive thought in general with a kind which is perhaps typical only because it holds an extreme position in a chain of mythical types which would have to be understood also at its other extremity? I am inclined to this that, in the history of humanity, the exceptional survival of the Jewish kerygma, in indefinitely renewed socio-cultural contexts, represents the other pole, also typical, because extreme, of mythical thought."<sup>16</sup>

How could we state more clearly that, beyond structural thought, but containing it, there is a hermeneutics, a quest for meaning, which brings to light the continuity of a living tradition of an open duration? The myths and symbols of the Hebrew world are the flowering point, the foundation stone, the expression, allowing the divine Word to disclose its message of salvation in time, by transfiguring time, by "ransoming" it, as Scripture says.

This makes it possible for Ricoeur to write: "In this chain of types thus fixed by their two poles, temporality—that of tradition and that of interpretation—has a different aspect according to whether synchrony prevails over diachrony or the reverse. At one extreme, that of the totemic type, we have a crushed temporality, which fairly well confirms the remark of Boas, 'We would say that mythological worlds are destined to be destroyed almost as soon as they are formed, so that new worlds may be born from their fragments . . .' At the other extreme, that of the kerygmatic type, it is a temporality regulated by the continual recapturing of meaning in an interpretive tradition."<sup>17</sup>

If we consider the two images of man together, that of existential thought and that of primitive thought, we discover a

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 615–616.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 616.

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polarity of obstacle and value, captivity and freedom, synchrony and event, lack of hope and hope. On the level of the Christian approach to these inevitable polarities, we discover not a denial of these situations but an acceptance of them and a passing beyond them.

We purposely use this rather philosophical vocabulary, for we are here at the approach to Christian anthropology, not starting from revealed sources, but from the cultural conditions of our time.

### 3. MAN AND THE WORLD, MAN AND MAN

a) *The Humanistic Approach.* At the world conference The Church and Society at Geneva in July, 1966, two types of "humanistic" approach were seen to take shape rather quickly in the face of the problem of the development, "the new name of peace."<sup>18</sup>

The first sees man confronting the world: this is the view of the technologist. Revolution is out of date, outmoded, because the problems have become so complex, for instance from the economic and social point of view, that the best way to spoil everything is to work in a whirlwind. What is required is patience, attention, competence.

The second, on the contrary, considers that what is of primary importance is interhuman relations. If we are not successful in creating among men, clans, races, nations, a consciousness of humanity, we will never get anywhere.

The first type of humanism is reflected quite clearly in Fourastier's book *Le grand espoir du vingtième siècle*. It is expressed also in these words of Margaret Mead—whom we must avoid classifying, however, without further ado, under either category: "Technology has been spoken of as a means of de-humanizing man, but it is forgotten that technology also makes it possible to humanize him. Millions of women can now ex-

<sup>18</sup> This view comes from an article by C. West in *Background Information* prepared for the Church and Society Conference at Geneva.

pect their child without fear of dying; millions of children are born who will live. The pearl necklace I am wearing did not even cost the life of a single oyster, did not endanger the life of any diver. These are synthetic pearls; nobody will want to steal them."

The second type is found in the prophetic book of Ortega y Gasset, *Revolt of the Masses*. At Geneva Professor Adegbola, an African, likewise spoke of the danger of seeing "a community of desperate people being gradually created. Nuclear war may break out not because a people would be tempted to use its nuclear arms, but because men would have lost their faith in man."

b) *The Christian Approach.* Here again, as with existentialism and structuralism, the two views are complementary, not in the manner of a quantitative amount, but as two inclusive, encompassing views, each touching the whole of human reality but according to different perspectives. In other words, what is viewed is in each case the whole, but the angle of vision changes.

Man is indeed at one and the same time the technologist confronting a universe whose total technical intelligibility he hopes to penetrate further and further, and the "I" who confronts, for better or for worse, the world of "others." This world may seem to him like "hell"—"hell is other people," says a character of Sartre—or like "paradise," according to another expression of a character of Gabriel Marcel.

Man is indeed "created in the image and likeness of God." Now this topic, to which we shall return in the third part of this essay, signifies, among other things, two complementary aspects. The first is that he is called to have dominion over the world, to subjugate it to himself. Doubtless, this subjugation, this domination is infinitely more far-reaching than simple technological power; but the latter is integrated, or at least may be integrated, into the vocation of man. It is not in spite of the fact of man's being created in God's image that he rules the world, but because he is created in that image. This theme,

which is very important in the pastoral constitution *Gaudium et spes*, is the theological foundation of that form of scientific humanism of which D. Dubarle speaks. We may speak, in this context, of faith and knowledge.

The creation of man in the image of God also signifies in Genesis that man is called to a life with the rest of men. The community of men is a vocation inscribed in creation itself. Deuteronomy, to take an example, is in this regard made up of laws whose purpose is to create among the members of the people of Israel bonds of justice and solidarity. The history of salvation, as Scripture describes it, teaches us that the lights are here as great as the darknesses. The Bible testifies neither to a whimpering humanitarianism nor to a cynical realism. It shows us men as a prey to the passions of hate and envy, but also raised sometimes above themselves in friendship and hope.

#### 4. THE SECULAR CITY

a) *Secularization*. This heading is borrowed from the famous book of Harvey Cox, *The Secular City*, which in 1965 was an event as important in the publishing world as *Honest to God* by Bishop John Robinson in 1963.<sup>19</sup>

It is essential not to misunderstand. Harvey Cox carefully distinguishes secularization, which is a fact, from secularism, which is a system, an ideology. "It is true," writes A. Leonard, "there exists today both in Protestant and Catholic circles . . . a lively awareness of the relation between Christianity and the world, the world seen not only as the cosmos or the indestructible order of the Greeks and the Stoics, or as the Mother-Nature of the Romantics, but as space, time, and the product of the creativity of man."<sup>20</sup>

Instead of the lonely and secret valley, which the Cistercian Abbey "sacralizes," the former giving in its turn to the Cis-

<sup>19</sup> A. Leonard, "Cox et la théologie radicale américaine," *Revue Nouvelle*, 46 (1967), 55.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

tercian Church a kind of extension of cosmic sacredness, we encounter the Empire State Building of New York, from whose heights the city appears as made by man and for man, for his glory and no longer for that of the Creator. While Paris still appears constructed around the Ile de la Cité, which is itself centered around Notre Dame de Paris, in New York, in the deep canyons of the city, we do not discover churches; we have to search out St. Patrick's Cathedral, though it is larger than Notre Dame de Paris.

In other words, the stoic world in which the divine was in some manner suspended in the visible cosmos, in the form of that subtle fire, of that logos, holding everything together, there were in this universe areas particularly sacred, but in its entirety it participated in this diffuse divinity. The eye, then, while producing light, to use Goethe's expression, in some way unexpectedly came upon the divine at a bend in the road, in the hollow of a valley.

This view is not evidently false; it expresses one possible approach to the divinity. But during the course of time it was linked up with a political, social, and cultural ideology which had in some way sacralized the universe of men. What has been called in the West the "*Corpus Christianum*" or "Christian Republic" participates in this sacralization. This latter, once more, is one of the high points of the history of man, but it is not the only possible form of Christianization.

We are faced at present with a general clearing-up, a profound upheaval. The awareness on the part of man, in a manner infinitely more acute, of his power over the world, the growth of the conviction that it is possible from now on for the first time in history to act on a world scale and, for example, to eliminate the spectre of misery and hunger, has effected a change, has brought minds to a threshold beyond which they will never feel the same. The *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* says that man is the author of culture (art. 55), and since this is much more than the art of embellishing empty and free spaces, but the activity of cultivation by which man betters, culture changes his terrestrial situa-

tion (art. 53, 1, 2); to say that man is the artisan of culture is equivalent to affirming that he is the author of his own human development.

Clearly, there is a risk here of desecrating the world, of desacralizing it at will, of treating it offhand as something arbitrary. It is also evident that while striving to explode taboos we run the risk of confusing caricatures of the sacred with its authentic manifestations. The kind of prejudice of all knowledge and all language in sexual matters throws into confusion the legitimate overcoming of dangerous fears and taboos, and destroys, under the ruthless light of curiosity and greed, the reality in which we share in the Creator's power over life.

Hans Urs von Balthasar, in *Dieu et l'homme d'aujourd'hui*, a masterly and prophetic book (1956), has given a wonderful description of this passing of theology to anthropology. He has shown how man, conscious of being king of creation, knowing also that he cannot wrap himself up in the protecting cloak of a Mother Nature, finds himself burdened with a heavy responsibility which he can share only with his fellow man.<sup>21</sup>

b) *A Religion for Secularized Man.* We shall not go into details on this point, since other speakers of this congress will devote particular studies to it.

We must note, first of all, with A. Leonard, the importance of the phenomenon in its religious repercussions. "The world that certain theologians are preoccupied to understand is the urban, industrial, technical, secular world that the practical applications of science create around us. These theologians, at least in intention, want to go beyond superficial adaptations. It is not a question of simply changing one's dress and using television and radio. What is questioned by the theologians in the United States who like to call themselves 'radical' are the traditional forms of thought of Christianity, the ecclesiastical institutions as they are concretely lived, and the moral attitudes in the face of the new social, economic, and political problems of the

<sup>21</sup> This book appears in English under the title *The God Question and the Modern Man*, New York, 1967.

modern world. A new generation of Christians and theologians has appeared in the United States which is not very sensitive to the precautions, warnings, and admonitions which Gabriel Marcel has given in abundance since the end of the war concerning the dangers of technocracy.”<sup>22</sup>

We must next distinguish the theology of secularization from that of the so-called death of God. This latter movement, which seems to have lost some of its strength, belongs to a different climate from that of secularization. Theologians like Harvey Cox and Leslie Newbegin, who are, moreover, profoundly different from each other, attempt, in the face of the *fact* of secularization, to discover aspects of Christian revelation which enable them to give it a meaning and a direction.

Two reflections will orient us a little. The first is the theme of man created to the image of God. The fact of secularization allows us to discover that the world has been entrusted to man to an infinitely more radical extent than one thought. To be sure, this dominion over the world cannot be arbitrary; it cannot “violate” in some way the structures that give the world its order and organization. All the same it is man who makes these appear, who uses them, who brings them to perfection. In other words, we must transfer *to man* what is essential to the reality of the sacred; he is, we would say, its principal analogue in relation to the world, while God remains, let it be understood, the transcendent source and principle.

My second remark is that the reality of the sacred is present in a transcendent sense in *the humanity of Jesus Christ*. Those who speak of “Christianity without religion” evidently give to the latter term a precise meaning: they have in mind a series of situations of “Christendom” which have existed and still exist, and which, according to them, can disappear, and even ought to do so. Those who hold this opinion often refer to Bonhoeffer. But it should be pointed out that Bonhoeffer himself saw these matters somewhat differently. We have only to read his *Ethics* to see that at the center of his thought there is

<sup>22</sup> A. Leonard, *art. cit.*, 55, 56, n. 1.

Christ, the incarnate Son of God. It is to this Christ that we must give witness in this desacralized world.<sup>23</sup>

Thus we see a line of thought delineated which accepts in a positive way what is right in secularization. We meet again the theme of man in the image of God, as also the person of Jesus Christ. We discover a line that ties together *anthropology* and *Christology*. This shows that the cultural facts can orient us in the direction of a rediscovery of certain essential biblical views. The view of the "history of salvation" appears more and more significant, and along with it eschatology. "The profound intention of Harvey Cox," says A. Leonard, "is not to eliminate the action of God but to perceive it where we had not yet learned to do so." And a little further on, he writes apropos of Moltmann's book *Theologie der Hoffnung*: "It is not a matter of reducing Christian hope to a humanism, but to open Christian hope to the hope of the concrete and historical world." And again, "Secularization and urbanization are not threats but occasions of development for biblical faith."<sup>24</sup>

## 5. THE CONTRIBUTION OF YOUNG NATIONS AND YOUNG CHURCHES

a) "Europe, Small Headland of the Asiatic Continent"? The purpose of this last cultural fact is to enlarge prior perspectives. It would be dangerous to sketch the necessary renewal of Christian anthropology if we only took into account the recent *Western* problematic. Undoubtedly, it is essential. It is critical. It is positive—at least, as has been shown, it can be.

Nevertheless, the Church is now faced with a *new mission* "towards a new Judea, a new Samaria, and new ends of the

<sup>23</sup> R. Marlé, "Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Témoin de Jesus-Christ parmi ses frères" in *Christianisme en Mouvement*, Tournai-Paris, 1967; see also Leslie Newbegin, "Une religion pour un monde séculier" in the same collection.

<sup>24</sup> Leonard, *art. cit.*, 66–67. See S. Paniker, "Teoria del hombre secular" in *Convivium*, 23 (1967), 49–68.

earth." The ancient cultures, poorly known up until a short time ago, compel us to "widen the brow of Pallas Athena," as the lamented René Grousset said. André Malraux has shown how photographic and mechanical reproduction enables us to visit the imaginary museums of sculpture, painting, world music. He does not hesitate to say that this phenomenon was as important as the invention of the printing press by Gutenberg. The arts in space and time have also in a way found their printing press.

The first fact that we must recognize, the importance of the "sacred" arts, already invites prudence in the examination of secularization.

A more general observation, and one that for us is more essential, is the close bond these cultures reveal between *man and the world*, between *man and man* in the community of men. A human being appears (for example in black Africa—and also in Brazil, in lands touched by African influence) as a concrete being, incarnated, "of flesh and blood," embedded in the natural environment, tied by a thousand bonds to his fellow men. The feeling of human community, warm and immediate, is evident in this culture, as also the participation of human beings in the world of the stars, mountains and valleys, water and earth.

An African-Negro anthology of the black literature of the twentieth century<sup>25</sup> marvellously reveals this depth of feeling of community, and also of the spontaneous participation of man and the cosmos. Europe cannot forget or neglect that; otherwise it would become "the little headland of the Asiatic continent" of which Valéry speaks. It is this geographically; it should not be it spiritually, culturally, for it can and ought to dialogue with this type of culture based on participation.

Permit me to quote a passage that will elucidate this view, which is so important for the elaboration of an integral anthropology. It comes from Sedar Senghor, "the apostle of the return to African sources." The poem is called "Nuit de Sine."

<sup>25</sup> L. Kesteloot, *Anthologie négro-africaine* in the collection *Marabout-Université*, Verviers, 1967.

RENEWAL OF THE DOCTRINE OF MAN

Femme, pose sur mon front tes mains balsamiques,  
tes mains douces plus que fourrure.

Là-haut les palmes balancées qui bruissent dans la haute brise nocturne

A peine. Pas même la chanson de nourrice.

Qu'il nous berce, le silence rythmé.

Ecoutons son chant, écoutons battre notre sang sombre, écoutons  
Battre le pouls profond de l'Afrique dans la brume des villages perdus.

Voici que décline la lune lasse vers son lit de mer étale

Voici que s'assoupissent les éclats de rire, que les conteurs eux-mêmes

Dodelinent de la tête comme l'enfant sur le dos de sa mère

Voici que les pieds des danseurs s'alourdissent; que s'alourdissent la langue des chanteurs alternés.

C'est l'heure des étoiles et de la Nuit qui songe

S'accoude à cette colline de nuages, drapé dans son pagne de lait.

Les toits des cases luisent tendrement. Que disent-ils, si confidentiel aux étoiles.

Dedans, le foyer s'éteint dans l'intimité d'odeurs âcres et douces.

Femme, allume la lampe au beurre clair, que causent autour les ancêtres, comme les parents, les enfants au lit.

Ecoutons la voix des Anciens d'Elissa. Comme nous exilés

Ils n'ont pas voulu mourir, que se perdit par les sables leur torrent séminal.

Que j'écoute, dans la case enfumée que visite un reflet d'âmes propices

Ma tête sur ton sein chaud comme un dang au sortir du feu et fumant

Que je respire l'odeur de nos morts, que je recueille et redise leur voix vivante, que j'apprenne à

Vivre avant de descendre, au-delà du plongeur, dans les hautes profondeurs du sommeil.<sup>26</sup>

b) *Man, in the People of God, between Death and Life.* This vision of concrete man, close to his human brothers, living the great rhythms of the universe, finds an echo in the biblical and liturgical theme of the people of God on the one hand, and of the hope of the resurrection on the other.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 111–112.

The young churches of Africa, for example, spontaneously experience Christianity from the point of view of this life in community in common. Individual salvation appears a strange thing when it is seen separate from that of other men.

Certain African thinkers have even been led to see in the love of man for woman, of parents for children, an image and reflection of the life of the Trinity. In this, moreover, they are joined by famous men, as different as Paul Evdokimov, the orthodox theologian, and Karl Barth.

But, apart from this particular view, it is certain that the biblical words about God "from whom all fatherhood comes in heaven and in earth" finds a spontaneous echo in this Christian anthropology.

The vision of man in flesh and blood, incarnated in a frightfully concrete world, also finds an echo in the hope of the *resurrection*. The native tendency of Africans to mime, to dance their religious joy during the liturgy often surprises the more abstract countries of Latin culture. To take an example from Latin America, the *Missa criolla* incarnates in its entirety the profound prayer and faith of the community, but expresses it on the basis of *rhythms* which almost irresistibly call for dancing, for "speaking" the joy of Christian hope, like David before the ark. When we think of these creations of religious music we are sometimes reminded of those little pieces of paper that the Japanese carefully fold: placed in the water they become a boat, a pagoda, a bridge. In the same way, perhaps a too thin view of man and his salvation regains an unknown greatness and dimension when immersed in the "mother waters" of the communion of a community with God's universe. After all, the Bible often speaks of "timbrels and cymbals," and perhaps this concrete dimension is wanting in our abstract, ethical anthropology.

Along the same lines, this Christian experience of these peoples is spontaneously open to the resurrection. They cannot conceive of a salvation that would be only "of the soul." We must recognize, moreover, that the Bible nowhere speaks of this very explicitly, but always of the resurrection, and of the participation

in the kingdom of God "under new heavens, on a new earth."

May I recall here the view of Unamuno? He too thought only of the man of flesh and bone. He wanted "sobrevivir," that is to say, not "to survive" in the sense of a life escaping death, but "to super-live," to live fully, saved both in soul and body. He too had rediscovered this dimension of anthropology. His *Diario* of 1897—as yet unpublished—reveals that he had rediscovered concretely this essential aspect of Christianity through contact with the Fathers of the Church, especially St. Athanasius.<sup>27</sup>

The example of Unamuno shows that the approach of those who still live in contact with the profound sources of social and cosmic life rediscover faith in the resurrection, at the heart of anthropology. It is not only Africa that spontaneously redisCOVERS that "if Christ be not risen, our faith is empty."

## II. THE CATEGORIES OF THOUGHT OF RENEWED ANTHROPOLOGY

We can go a bit further and directly approach the data of Christian theology on the subject of man. There are two steps here: first, to examine the underlying categories of thought, the second to approach the anthropological themes themselves in their proper kerygmatic sense. This approach will be the object of the third and final section of this essay. The present section is located at the meeting point of the general cultural data and the Christian affirmation properly so-called.<sup>28</sup>

### 1. Hebrew Categories

We must remark, first of all, comparing Hebrew and Greek categories of thought, that a monolithic opposition must be avoided. In fact, the two types of thought have influenced each

<sup>27</sup> Charles Moeller, *Textos inéditos de Unamuno*, Cartagena, 1964.

<sup>28</sup> I am quite close to F. P. Fiorenza and J. B. Metz, "Der Mensch als Einheit von Leib und Seele," *MS*, 584–633.

other, and it would be wrong to say that everything that is Greek is "improper," strange, unauthentic reality in comparison with the Hebrew substratum, which alone would be authentic. Moreover, the influence of other cultural worlds, for example, the Greek, already appear in the Old Testament. So true is this that Duméry could speak of the Bible as "an estuary of cultures." We must add, moreover, that originality is not an argument as such in favor of a greater authenticity.<sup>29</sup> This whole section will show the necessary and possible synthesis between these different modes of thinking.

Another preliminary remark is that the anthropological concrete cannot be set forth so as to prejudice the view of the whole, above all of the eschatological perspective. In other words—and we will observe it more and more—we must unite a view according to which man is seen in a natural-cosmological synthesis and in historical (*geschichtlich*) and eschatological dynamics.<sup>30</sup>

It is unnecessary to describe in detail the differences between the Greek and Hebrew mentalities. Let us recall the basic points from the viewpoint of our research. There has been much emphasis on Greek dualism: matter, the body, as cause of error (remember Plato's comparison of the pilot and the ship), the stressing of the value of the soul at the expense of the body, the view of man's perfection, closed upon itself, in the twofold direction of the soul as the form of the body and of man as a microcosm.<sup>31</sup>

The Hebrew mentality, on the contrary, sees things synthetically and as a whole. *Nefes* is the whole man; *ruah* expresses the dynamic relations between man and God; *basar*, finally, expresses what man *is*, the whole person from the viewpoint of his frailty, as a creature, but also in his relationship with the family and with others.<sup>32</sup>

In this perspective, death is not the separation of the soul and body, but the separation of the community from life with

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 584.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 585.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 585–589.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 589–592.

Yahweh. Sin is not in the body but in the heart. Eschatology and hamartiology are in agreement with each other.

The universe is not "a great whole," neither is it "the body of God." Before God, and left to itself, the "flesh" expresses the transitory aspect of every creature in the face of the Almighty.<sup>33</sup>

## 2. *The New Testament*

It is very characteristic that, on the basis of late Judaism, which in some of its tendencies allowed itself to be influenced by certain aspects of Greek dualism, the anthropology of the New Testament remained faithful to that of the Old.

We would like here to refer to the translations and explanations of Mark 8, 35–37: "What does it profit a man to gain the whole world if he loses his own life?", where we see clearly the meaning that must be given to the term *psuché*.

Paul is a pluralist, if we can use this term, but he always has the whole man in view. For example, *pneuma* and *sarx* are never two parts in a composite organism, but the contrast between the weakness of man and the strength of God. We see this clearly in Romans 1, 3 and also in Romans 7; it is a matter of two fundamental situations of man.<sup>34</sup>

## 3. *Theological Evolution*

It is known that the first Fathers of the Church had to struggle against Gnosticism. St. Irenaeus, for example, saw in the human body, animated by the spirit, the image of which God spoke in *Genesis*.

On the contrary, quickly enough with Clement and Origen, the image of God was no longer seen in the animated body but in the soul. Augustine had a decisive influence here. His proble-

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 593.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 598–600.

matic was too influenced by that of Manicheism—indeed we always retain some element of what we fight against! He saw in the soul the essence of man; he often tended to see the body as the cause of error. Time, for him, was a kind of extension of the soul. Of course we do not wish to take away from the marvelous Augustinian reflection on *mens-notitia-amor*, in which he saw the image of the Trinity in man. But meanwhile his view of salvation was too uniquely inspired by the theme “*spiritus in anima*.<sup>85</sup>

It is known that in pre-scholasticism two tendencies appeared, the one radically dualistic, with the Victorines, the other “synthetic,” with Alain of Lille and the rest. What is important here is the “radical correction” effected by St. Thomas. He affirmed the basic unity of man; for him “the soul” is “the actuality of the body.” In other words, we have here a “reply” which is faithful to the biblical view, but which is at the same time reformulated with the help of Greek concepts. Metz, in a fine article that I am following closely in this section, affirms that in a sense we have here a Thomistic answer to the modern theme of “subjectivity and *Dasein*.<sup>86</sup>

We cannot insist too much on this synthesis effected in this way between biblical and Greek categories on the one hand, and between the Thomistic view and the modern approach on the other. If indeed we must at all costs integrate biblical data with the field of anthropology (for, as we have seen in the first section of this essay, there is a kind of pre-established harmony between the five cultural data that we have proposed and the themes of Scripture), we must equally avoid doing it in a spirit of facile opposition to Hellenistic categories.

We are not forgetting that too frequently, under the name of Thomistic anthropology, we have taught students, preached to the Christian people, a kind of disguised Cartesianism, or later, rationalistic Wolfism. Likewise, too often we have been Thomistic in our affirmations of principle about the soul as the

<sup>85</sup> G. Philips and C. Moeller, *Grâce et oecuménisme*, Chevetogne, 1957, pp. 68–69, 75.

<sup>86</sup> Fiorenza and Metz, *art. cit.*, 600–613.

form of the body in our moral approach to questions; but we are no longer—without knowing it. We have only to think of the undervaluing of sexual activity in marriage up to recent times. But if at the present moment we perhaps go to extremes in this matter, we ought to recapture this essential fact that a more attentive listening to the Bible would have recalled: to be united to a wife is, in biblical language, "to know her." Likewise, the view of salvation too exclusively concerned with the mere "vision" of God, without in any way integrating with this the resurrection which is the object of our faith; the attaching of importance exclusively to the particular judgment without keeping a real psychological place for the general judgment and the final resurrection, mark the danger of a *practical* dualism.

But, let us repeat, this affirmation of concrete, total man in his whole salvation should not be made at the expense of centuries of philosophical reflections inspired by the greatest thinkers of Greek antiquity. As the same dialogue must be undertaken with other wisdoms and philosophical systems—as, for example, with Indian thought, as a Lacombe, a Grousset, has done—it is important not to enclose us in a kind of biblical alibi, which by its exclusiveness would destroy all serious anthropological research.

#### *4. Theological Explanation*

As Fiorenza and Metz have remarked,<sup>87</sup> the Church in its various declarations and definitions has always defended the concrete unity of man. It has equally emphasized the bond between anthropology, soteriology, and eschatology.

From the viewpoint of *anthropology*, the unity of soul and body, if we take seriously the Thomistic view, means that the real, integral man must be understood as a spiritual (*seelisch*) whole and as a bodily whole. It is not a question of two beings or two realities belonging to man, or two levels in man. We

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 614–617.

must not, therefore, see the body as a reality pre-existing to man's subjectivity; the body is located within the reality of that awareness, it is assumed in that consciousness.<sup>38</sup> As a complement of this, the soul signifies and assumes everything human and even the inter-human (in the sense of the relations of inter-subjectivity). In this perspective we understand that it can be said that the more "spiritual" the human being, the more it is "incarnated." This reminds us of the famous "fluttering of eyelids" that Giraudoux's Ulysses recognized in Andromaque and that recalled to him his wife Penelope. The deeper and more "spiritual" the love between spouses becomes, the more also it is incarnated; sensible language becomes more and more able to transmit by imperceptible, but concrete signs, friendship, affection, and love.<sup>39</sup>

From the viewpoint of *soteriology*, the body as well as the soul is close to God. Salvation is grace in Jesus Christ, and not in an "ontological" relationship between the soul and the divine, which would exclude the body. In this sense the "flesh" is a "bearer of salvation" in Jesus Christ. Likewise, concupiscence belongs to the entire man. No doubt from the fact of corporeity certain conditionings must be pointed out, but also a positive signification. In this sense Metz was able to write an article with the title *Caro, cardo salutis*, inspired, moreover, by the soteriology of Tertullian.<sup>40</sup>

From the viewpoint of *eschatology* certain problems are raised in the theological synthesis; for example, in connection with the definition of the immortality of the soul at the Lateran Council (1513–1517). But it has been remarked that this text is especially directed against Neo-Aristotelianism, which denied the survival of the individual. What the Council wanted to note above all was the immortality of each individual person. All this, moreover, must be viewed not in a static, "thingish" perspective, but on the contrary in the "historical-anthropo-

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 631–622, citing a work by J. B. Metz, one of the best living specialists in Christian anthropology.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 622.

<sup>40</sup> *Hochland*, 55 (1662), 97–107.

centric" line. It could even be said that in a sense immortality is at one and the same time "of nature" and "of grace."<sup>41</sup>

There is no doubt a delicate problem, namely, that of the immediate vision of God after death, while total salvation is realized only by the resurrection. What is certain is that the Church's doctrine on the immediate vision after death intended to show the uniqueness (*Einmaligkeit*) of human destiny, in the light of God's judgment. But this does not lessen the difficulty raised by the life of a "separated soul" after death, deprived of the body of which it is the substantial form.

A series of hypotheses has been made on this subject, for example that of Karl Rahner, mentioned by Metz and Fiorenza—at death the soul would not become "*a-kosmisch*" but "*all-kosmisch*." Others have spoken of a kind of "resurrection already begun."<sup>42</sup> There is here an important field of research.

We think it is important to emphasize again this synthetic approach of the categories of Christian anthropology. When all is said and done, we perceive the same reality, the same truth, namely, the concrete unity of man, in one history and one place, his responsibility regarding himself, others, and the world, the integral character of salvation, by a twofold route, that of Hebrew thought and that of Hellenistic systematization. We find ourselves at a crossroad where at the same time are marked out the roads towards biblical thought, towards patristics and the thought of St. Thomas, and finally towards certain aspects of modern thought.

These are the data of faith that we must now recall in themselves.

### III. TRADITIONAL DATA

#### *1. The Anthropological Structure of "Gaudium et spes"*

You know that the *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* is oriented more and more in the direction of a

<sup>41</sup> Fiorenza and Metz, *art. cit.*, 630.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 631–632.

Christian anthropology. It is useful to point out the theological structure of this latter. Three themes constitute the backbone of this constitution: man created in the image of God, the resurrected Christ, the creative illuminative Word. As we see at once, they are biblical, patristic, liturgical, conciliatory.

In other words, the Council has chosen an approach that also allows dialogue with non-Catholic Christians. That is why there are left out the notions of "human nature," "natural law," "nature and supernature." To be sure, these notions are not denied, but they are left out of consideration in order to have a more ecumenical and also more conciliatory problematic.

Human dignity, which is most frequently appealed to in the second part, beginning with chapter 3, is explicitly tied to the theme of the creation of man to the image of God.

Now that we have made these remarks, let us sketch in the anthropological structure of the text. This clarification is not useless, for it is not always so apparent.

### 1. MAN CREATED IN THE IMAGE OF GOD

This theme is clearly set in relation to the spiritual interiority that reunites man to God. But it is not this aspect that was put in relief. Given the general orientation of the Constitution, namely the role of the Church in the world of today, two aspects of the biblical theme have been emphasized. The first is that man was created to the *image* of God in this sense (not exclusive, we repeat), that he is called to *dominate creation*, to submit it to himself, to be its king. The quotation of Psalm 8, in connection with that of Genesis 1, makes this point perfectly clear.

It should be noted, moreover, that this is the meaning of the text itself of Genesis. The sacred book considers first of all this reflection in man of God's sovereignty over the world. And we grasp immediately the importance of this approach. First of all, it enables us to build an essential theological relation between man's activity, his work of dominating the world, including that of technique, and his divine vocation. Then we catch a glimpse

of how the humanity of the resurrected Christ is the model, the archetype of man created to the image of God: in it indeed appears in a transcendent manner the perfect domination, the victory over disorder and evil. We understand at the same time that if there is a link between creation in the image of God and the technical activity of man, this is only one aspect which must not above all be isolated from others. Finally, the eschatological dimension of this creation in the image of God is also apparent; the text of *Gaudium et spes* speaks several times of sin. At the same time there is disclosed the eschatological perspective of this creation in the image of God—"protology" is also "eschatology."

The second point brought to light by the Constitution is that man is in the image of God equally by the communal character of his vocation. The Constitution connects chapter 2 of the first part, on the community of man, to creation in the image of God; it also connects certain essential aspects of conjugal love, in chapter 1 of the first part, to that same image. Indeed it is in the same context that the sacred writer takes up the theme of the image and introduces into it the fact of being man and woman in the structure of the family.

## 2. THE RESURRECTED CHRIST

We have already mentioned how the theme of creation in the image of God can be taken in isolation. It is profoundly tied to *Christology*.

We must guard against seeing the theme of the image only in relation to the activity of man on this world. We must also avoid seeing only the positive aspects. There are the passive aspects of human life, the sufferings, the failures, and death. There is also sin, which is not a transitory error, an absence of "coordination," and so forth, but a fundamental evil which God alone can conquer in us.

The theme of the Servant of Yahweh is as important as that of the royal domination over the world. It is its antithesis, the

mysterious reverse, as rich in truth as the first. It is the prophetic response to that "negativity" which the modern world emphasizes as much as the responsibility of man before the world. Indeed in modern culture there is as much insistence on grief, anguish, the feeling of nothingness, as on the positive aspect. We have only to think of Ionesco, for example, or of Samuel Beckett to discover the nocturnal face of man.

The Servant is Israel who suffers; he is also the mysterious prophet of whom we know that Jesus by his passion, by his obedience, and by his death, has given us the perfect revelation. The servant of Yahweh suffers; he also bears the sin of men.

It is in this line that we must make clear the resurrected humanity of Christ: it bears the stigmata of the passion, but in glory. The resurrection is the victory that God alone could win over the true, the ultimate disorder. In vanquishing sin, Christ has vanquished death; in vanquishing death, he has vanquished sin.

The archetype of humanism is thus that *lordly humanity* of the Christ of Easter. The domination of which Genesis speaks is infinitely more profound than a simple domination by human powers, aided though they be by God; it is even of a different type. It is the same domination whose projected shadows we perceive here below, but transfigured. We find it again beyond death, not in spite of the obedience to God the Father but by means of it.

The resurrected Christ is also he who can unite us to him in the Holy Spirit. If it is true, as Bossuet said, that the Church is Christ communicated in the Holy Spirit, we grasp how the community of men finds in the resurrected Christ its archetype and its ultimate cause. In Jesus, on Easter morn, communion among the living is regained, but also that more profound communion that conquers death in charity and truth.

We understand the importance of this aspect of anthropology in *Gaudium et spes* when we notice that each chapter of the first part—the most important in a sense because it lays the doctrinal foundations for what will be said in the second part—ends with a section on the *paschal mystery*.

This is not a "theological" affectation but a conscious construction. Just as in section 2 of *Gaudium et spes* the world is described in all its complex ambiguity—at once a world of men, creation of God, a world under the power of sin, and a world redeemed—each time they wanted to safeguard this same polarity in connection with the four great themes—the person, the community, the meaning of human activity, the role of the Church. In other words, they have gone beyond the static view of an anthropology that would be, as it were, solidified in a "cosmology." On the contrary, the dynamic perspective prevails: that of the history of salvation. That is why, through the *Christological aspect of anthropology*, it is also the *eschatological* fullness of the former that is delineated. In other words, the order of "creation" is not considered absolutely in itself, separate from the order of redemption. The perspective is at once of creation and of redemption.

Clearly, this is an important ecumenical orientation—we have only to think of the concern of orthodox theologians in this regard to see the point. But it is equally important to notice that the data of faith brought to our attention by the Council are recalled in a truly conciliatory, that is to say, *universal* perspective, giving a fundamental orientation that also enables us to organize research.

### 3. THE WORD, CREATOR AND ILLUMINATOR

A third and final theme underlies *Gaudium et spes*. It is connected with the Johannine theme of the Word by which everything has been created. The theme of Wisdom in the Old Testament, which is also connected both to the law of Moses and to a certain mysterious order in creation, can be united to that of the Creator Word. Moreover, it is in the well-known antiphon, *O Sapientia*, that the themes of wisdom and of logos are joined in a profoundly theological manner.

The Fathers, and above all the Greeks, have always insisted on the special bond that unites the Word to his creation: they

speak of *idion plâsma*, the creation that properly belongs to him. At the same time they declared that the Creator Word was always present in this world. "The Word was present in this world before his incarnation," St. Irenaeus said in a text quoted in *Gaudium et spes*.

One of the modes of presence that the patristic tradition has particularly emphasized is that of the Word as *light*. Justin, Irenaeus, Clement, Gregory of Nazianzus, and others have often declared that everything good and true in Plato's thought, for example, came from that illuminating presence of the Word. They saw in it one of the aspects of the "preparation of the Gospel" of which Eusebius spoke.

The third theme permits a theological approach to the problem of the relation between the history of the world (*Weltgeschichte*) and the history of salvation (*Heilsgeschichte*). The largest part of the universe, in space and time, has remained outside the visible sphere of the Church and its preaching, both in the order of culture and of religion. The fact of being outside the influence of the *Church* does not mean that one is barred from the mysterious domain of the illuminating presence of the Creator-Word. In other words, we have here a "theological place" where we can make non-Christian culture and religions and the order of universal salvation meet. We catch sight of a way to indicate unity without falling into syncretism.

At present there are still many areas of culture and religion that are not practically touched by the visible influence of the Church; what is good and true in them is also, perhaps, in the sphere of the Word mysteriously present among us.

In this sense there would no longer be "profane" things; it would be us who would profane them by sin. At the same time, to be within the sphere of the Word does not mean either to have entered into the domain of liturgical or ecclesial sacralization.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>43</sup> C. Moeller, "Perspectives théologiques postconciliaires," in *La constitution pastorale Gaudium et spes*, a commentary, to appear in *Unam Sanctam*, III, Conclusions, has developed this tripartite structure of *Gaudium et spes*.

## 2. Studies and Developments

Within this broad framework it is good to sketch several lines of study in order to deepen Christian anthropology. Three perspectives appear to be important.

### 1. THE LITURGICAL AND CULTURAL FRAMEWORK

Consider the liturgical and cultural framework of the accounts of man's creation. For example, the mention of "evening" in Genesis 1 alludes to the exodus from Egypt; the mention of "morning" alludes to the covenant of Sinai. We see, therefore, that the history of creation is intermingled, interwoven with the history of salvation. In this sense we see why the essential point to the account is not in the how but in the what, namely, the essential relation of the creature to God. Likewise, the term "*bara*" by its use in the Old Testament reveals a kind of bridge between the two great intervals of God's activity, from the beginning to the end.

In other words, the literary genre of Genesis 1–3, no matter how many documents were utilized, is that of the "retrospective prophecy," of a "*geschichtliche Ätiologie*," as the Germans say. We are in the presence of a kind of backward contemplation of creation "*in initio*," in the certitude of the new creation, in the future of hope.<sup>44</sup>

### 2. IMAGE OF GOD AND IMAGE OF CHRIST

Likeness to God, in the Old Testament, does not consist in the similitude there would be in the soul; it is not only in standing erect, in the same appearance as the divinity. Neither is it in the difference of sex, as Barth thought. Man is the image of

<sup>44</sup> H. Gross, "Theologische Exegese von Genesis 1–3," in *MS*, 421–439. See 425–431.

God in his corporeal and spiritual totality; this latter is the participation in the seigniory, in the rights of sovereignty of God in this world. Man is he who perfects the omnipotence of God by manifesting it; he is in some way a vizier of God. All this evidently implies that he is a free person, endowed with a spirit.

Now this resemblance to God becomes *resemblance to Christ* in the New Testament. In the center appears the Christological and soteriological function of the image of God. It is Christ who is the true image of God. In other words, Genesis 1 is taken up and reinterpreted Christologically. There is, therefore, a tension between the present state and the state of perfection; from which, again, the image of God must be understood beginning with Christ, who is its central point, in the perspective of the history of salvation, and vice versa. The image of God in Genesis is already prophecy, protology which calls for an eschatology.<sup>45</sup> You will notice how close this perspective is to that of *Gaudium et spes*, as has been said above.

### 3. INVISIBLE IMAGE, VISIBLE IMAGE

The study of tradition shows that reflection has been turned in three different directions. For Clement, Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, and the majority of the Greek and Latin Fathers, the model is the Logos and the image is in the soul. For St. Augustine, the model is the Trinity, which is reflected in the human soul, in the trinity "*mens-notitia-amor.*" Finally, Tertullian, Prudence, and Irenaeus think that the perfect model is in the incarnate Logos, and that the image is in the body spiritually animated, in the "resurrected body."<sup>46</sup>

It seems clear from everything that precedes, that it is this third line of reflection that is most in harmony with the whole.

<sup>45</sup> W. Seibel, "Der Mensch als Gottes übernatürliches Ebenbild," in *MS*, 806–818. See 807–808.

<sup>46</sup> *MS*, 810–12.

## RENEWAL OF THE DOCTRINE OF MAN

It also seems clear enough that the first two explanations, widespread though they are, profound and valuable though they remain, are too tied up with a somewhat partial view of anthropology. On the contrary, cultural data, theological categories, biblical images, the last Council, the true Thomistic synthesis, are turned in the same direction: that of a view of man concrete, one, present in history, saved (or lost) in his entirety, image of God, equally in this "integral totality."

It is indicated, therefore, that we push research in this direction along the line begun by St. Irenaeus.

### *3. Towards an Integral Christian Anthropology*

The preceding remarks about the visible image, placed in the whole framework, enables us to raise the *central problem* of contemporary anthropology and to outline its solution.

You will have noticed indeed a kind of antinomy, a tension, between two approaches. The first turns man so well towards this world, for which, before God, he is responsible, that ultimately all images go in the direction of "horizontality." What has been said above concerning the existential view, the secular city, shows this. Along the same line, everything that modern culture suggests to us, in the sense of sociological community, of intersubjectivity, turns in the same direction. Finally, it is an approach to the theme of the creation of man in the image of God that insists on the participation of man in the power of God. Relation to God is here seen *indirectly and in its human reflection*.

All that remains true, and it cannot be forgotten. But taken in isolation from the second point of view, this runs the risk of foundering in a kind of naturalism and also a kind of separatism completely unknown in Christian tradition, between the order of creation and the order of redemption.

On the contrary, the second approach sees man's center of gravity in his *direct* relation with God. Every time that we have begun the study for itself of the biblical, patristic, conciliar, and

liturgical data, we have met the same orientation: towards God, directly, essentially, and towards the future of the eschatological consummation. In other terms, the study of anthropology in its properly Christian data, as well as the use of the *Heilsgeschichte* method of the history of salvation, have shown this dynamism of man penetrating more and more into the depths of the *divinity* in the mystery of the *eschatological* fulness.

It can be said that the tension between these two approaches constitutes *the* problem of present day anthropology; it also surrounds the frontiers of the discussion in the modern world between Christians and non-believers, between Christians as well. All the discussions of Christianity without religion, of the death of God, of secularization include from some angle a reference to this crucial debate.

The solution is one of *synthesis*. It seems that St. Irenaeus' view of the image of God in the visible humanity of man, animated by the Spirit, intended for the resurrection, presents a mediating image in which the two approaches can be united.

In concrete, visible man, whose body is the presence of the soul, in which Irenaeus sees the image of God, there is a Christian answer to all the questions that come from the "horizontality," from this concern of a people of God present, like leaven, in the world.

But in this same man-image of God, which must grow in the fullness of the Spirit towards "the perfect man," which sums up creation but also offers it to God, participates in the life of God, we find the other pole of the direct relation to God which Christian thought and the magisterium must unceasingly recall.

This is not the place to describe in detail the anthropology of St. Irenaeus: we think that it would be worth the trouble to study it in detail. It is not by chance that thinkers like Teilhard de Chardin have discovered this Father of the Church with astonishment. To restore this anthropology to its rightful place is not an archeological work; it is work at that return to the sources which brings forth from the treasure of the Gospel *nova et vetera*.

To be sure, other researches in tradition should be made.

But this rediscovery of a source so close to its biblical fountain-head can work in the direction of the elaboration of the integral Christian anthropology that we wait for in this century.

#### *4. A Christian, Ecumenical Anthropology*

I do not know if anyone has noticed it, but in all this we are always face to face with *Christian* problems and not specifically Catholic ones, like for example the problem of the primacy of Peter.

This remark is important, especially in bringing this essay to a close. We are here faced with a new ecumenical task, that of *prospective* ecumenism. The world comes to knock on the door of the churches, of all churches. It is midnight, as in Luke's parable. The world knocks on the door, "is knocking on the door," Martin Luther King said in his sermon at the world conference the Church and Society held in Geneva in July, 1966. The world raises a series of questions.

These questions are common to all the Christian churches. Among them is the problem of man. The tensions do not overlap the frontiers of confessional divisions; they cut across the confessions themselves on the inside.

To give an answer, together, to this question of anthropology, is to engage in prospective ecumenism. Alas, our divisions do not disappear very much, but they change their appearance. They bend, become reoriented in some way towards that common question,<sup>47</sup> each remaining itself but drawing from the very convergence of effort a growing gravitational pull towards unity.

There is an immense common responsibility here, but also a great hope, which neither the Council neglected, nor those who come afterward and apply it. They cannot be deaf to this question that the world asks, knocking at midnight on the door of Christian churches.

<sup>47</sup> C. Moeller, "Ecumenismo e storia della salvezza," in *Humanitas*, 22 (1967), 296-298. See J. Y. Joliff, "Comprendre l'homme," *Introduction à une anthropologie philosophique*, I, Paris, 1967.

## 24.

# POLITICAL AND CIVIL ASPECTS OF THE CHURCH IN RENEWAL

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### 1.

THE theme of this paper (which is not intended as an exhaustive treatment but only as a stimulus to discussion) is: what are the consequences, or rather, what can be, on the level of political and civil life, the consequences of the renewal which the Council has produced in the concept of the Church and in its structures, in the concept of the relations of the Church with the other churches and religious denominations, and with the world in general?

In order to answer this question it is necessary to indicate briefly those points in which there has been a more considerable doctrinal renewal.

1. The first such point concerns the very concept of the Church. The Council has placed in relief the essentially mysterious nature of the Church, and the primacy and predominance of the mysterious aspect over the institutional aspect. Of course the Church is a visible institution, juridically structured and hierarchically constituted (see *Lumen gentium*, art. 8); however, the visible institution is at the service of the mysterious element; it should cause the latter to appear and should allow it to produce its effects of grace; just as the humanity of Christ,

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so too the visible organism of the Church, should be the transparency of the Word and the channel of his grace. This means that the Church as a visible organism has an essentially religious function, and not a function which is political or in any way profane. "The proper mission entrusted by Christ to his Church does not belong to the economic, political or social order; the goal which he has set for it belongs to the religious order" (*Gaudium et spes*, art. 42). This should be apparent in the visible action of the Church; from this follows the necessity that the Church appear as a religious force rather than as a political force, that it be a "service" and not a "power." That is, the Church should not present itself to the political community as one power in facing another power, nor should it be related as a "spiritual" power to a "temporal" power; and this should appear visibly and historically.

2. The second point of renewal concerns the structure of the Church; the Council has placed clearly in relief the monarchical-collegial structure of the Church. That is, the Church is not purely monarchical, just as it is not purely collegial; authority does not reside only in the pope, nor only in the episcopal body, but it resides at once in the pope and in the episcopal body with the pope. In fact, just as the pope, so also "the order of bishops, which succeeds the college of apostles in the magisterium and in the pastoral rule, (even more, it is the continuation of the apostolic body,) together with its head, the Roman pontiff, and never without this head, is really the subject of supreme and full power over the universal Church, although this power cannot be exercised without the consent of the Roman pontiff" (*Lumen gentium*, art. 22). This greater equilibrium in the exercise of the power which Christ gave to his Church leads to a greater evaluation of the episcopate in general and of the local episcopate; in this way it leads to a decentralization of government, which in particular nations is entrusted to the episcopal conferences to a greater extent than has been the case in the past.

3. The third point of renewal concerns the frank acceptance by the Church of the principle of religious liberty—or rather, of

civil liberty in religious matters—founded on respect for the dignity of the person; the Council declares, in fact, “that the right to religious liberty is founded really on the very dignity of the human person” (*Dignitatis humanae*, art. 2), who is morally obliged, of course, to seek religious truth, but in a way suited to his nature; that is—freely and without any external coercion. Moreover, the right to religious liberty “remains even in those who do not fulfill the obligation to seek the truth and adhere to it; and its exercise, so long as it respects the public order formed by justice, must not be hindered” (*ibid.*).

4. The fourth point of renewal concerns the recognition of pluralism in every field, even in religious beliefs; recognition of pluralism means, first of all, that the Church recognizes that the existence of a plurality of options and positions, even in the religious field, is a given fact worthy of respect, because it involves the freedom of the human person; it signifies, secondly, that the Church recognizes that she is not the only one who possesses truth, and the good is not her exclusive patrimony, but that “others” too possess truths and values, although mixed with errors and non-values; from this there follows the necessity that the Church establish a dialogue with the “others” in order to arrive together with them at the fulness of truth and good. This dialogue should take place first of all on the religious level: dialogue with non-Catholics, dialogue with non-Christians, dialogue with non-believers; but then it should be extended to all other fields. That is to say, the Church ought to establish a dialogue in order to give, but also in order to receive; in order to be the leaven of the world, but also in order to be enriched by the contributions of the world. The Church, in fact, “is like the leaven and soul of human society which must be renewed in Christ and transformed into the family of God” (*Gaudium et spes*, art. 40), but “at the same time, the Church is convinced that it can be aided greatly and in many ways, in preparing the way for the Gospel, by individual men and by human society with their endowments and their activity” (*ibid.*). In fact, “whoever contributes to the development of the human community on the level of the family, of culture, of economic

and social life as well as on the level of political life, either national or international, brings no little aid also, according to the design of God, to the community of the Church, according as the Church depends upon external factors. The Church, moreover, recognizes that much benefit has come to it and can come to it even from the opposition of its adversaries and persecutors" (*Gaudium et spes*, art. 44). In conclusion, the Church today intends to dialogue with all men, even with atheists and persecutors of the Church. "Regarding the desire to establish such a dialogue, inspired only by love of the truth and conducted with proper prudence, no-one is excluded; neither those who cultivate lofty human values although they do not yet recognize their author, nor those who are opposed to the Church and in various ways persecute her" (*ibid.* art. 92). In particular regarding atheists "the Church while absolutely rejecting atheism sincerely recognizes that all men, believers and non-believers, must contribute to the proper building up of this world in which they find themselves living together; and this cannot take place, certainly, without a sincere and prudent dialogue" (*ibid.*, art. 21).

5. The fifth point of renewal concerns the recognition of the autonomy of the temporal and of the autonomy of action of lay people in temporal matters: "All the realities which constitute the temporal order . . . are not only means by which man can attain his ultimate end, but they have a proper value placed in them by God, either considered in themselves or considered as parts of the whole temporal order" (*Apostolicam actuositatem*, art. 7); this very directedness to Christ "not only does not deprive the temporal order of its autonomy, of its proper ends, of its proper laws, of its proper means, of its importance for the good of man, but rather this directedness to Christ perfects the temporal order in its solidity and in its proper excellence, and at the same time adapts it to the integral vocation of man on the earth" (*ibid.*). Regarding laymen, "it belongs to them to assume as their proper task the establishment of the temporal order, and, in it, guided by the light of the Gospel and the thought of the Church, and moved by Christian charity, to work

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directly and in a concrete way . . . by their own responsibility” (*ibid.*).

6. The sixth point concerns the recognition of the lay nature of the state and of its character as an autonomous temporal instrument for the pursuit of the temporal common good; the state, that is, does not have directly the task of fostering religion. “The civil power, whose proper end is to care for the temporal common good, certainly should respect and favour the religious life of the citizens, but it goes beyond its area of competence when it presumes to direct or to prevent religious actions, “which transcend by their nature the terrestrial and temporal order of things” (*Dignitatis humanae*, art. 3). In reality, regarding religion the task of the state is “to assure to all citizens, by means of just laws and by other proper means, the effective protection of religious liberty and to bring about conditions favourable to the development of religious life, in such a way that the citizens may be really in a position to exercise their rights concerning religion and to fulfill their duties” (*ibid.*, art. 6). Moreover, while it is possible for the state in particular circumstances to concede to a particular religious community a special civil recognition, “the civil power should provide that the juridical equality of citizens, which really belongs to the common good of society, will never be violated for religious motives, either openly or in hidden forms, and that there will not be discrimination among them. From this it follows that it is illicit for the public power to impose upon the citizens by violence, fear, or other means, the profession of any religion whatsoever, or its repudiation, or to hinder anyone from adhering to a religious community or from abandoning it” (*ibid.*).

## 2.

What consequences on the political and civil level can be derived from these principles established by the Council?

1. The more profound awareness of the “mysterious” nature

and the "religious" function of the Church should lead to a renewal of the "political" structure of the Church of today, and to a renewal in the function which the Church exercises in the political field, and should give to such structure and action characteristics which are more markedly religious and concerned with service. In reality Vatican diplomacy, while keeping many external forms of politics and of power, has undergone a profound evolution in this last century. During the last war and thereafter it has rendered inestimable service to the cause of peace and for the minimization of the terrible hardships caused by the war. Today, then, under the impulse of Paul VI it is completely committed to the service of peace and of the development of nations. However, there remain external forms—an inheritance of times past—which cause people to look at the Church as a worldly power rather than as a religious and moral force which is weak with respect to earthly power but strong with the strength of Christ, able to say with Peter to the afflicted world: "I have neither gold nor silver, but I give you what I have: in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, walk" (Acts, 3, 6). As a matter of fact, many are still convinced that the Church can do no less than present itself in relation to temporal powers as itself a power and, insofar as possible, to compete with temporal powers in the political field, where what counts is the power at her disposition, prestige, cleverness, or at least human prudence (which is not always the prudence of the Gospel). From this view there derives a sort of ostentation in the diplomatic representations of the Vatican even in economically underdeveloped nations; also from this comes that evaluation of ecclesiastical diplomats based more on their "political" capacity than on their evangelical virtue (by this I do not mean that to make a good Vatican diplomat it is sufficient to have evangelical virtue!); from this, above all, stems the search for what is "politically" effective and in conformity with the ordinary norms of politics, even if it is not in full conformity with the spirit of the beatitudes.

2. The greater emphasis and responsibility given to the episcopate in general and to the episcopal conferences in par-

ticular, could have some repercussion in the political field. Since the episcopal conferences are responsible for the Church in their particular regions, some hold that the head of the episcopal conference could represent the pope and the Church before the state; that is, to occupy the post which nuncios now occupy. The task, then, of maintaining contacts between the Holy See and the local episcopate would be entrusted to an apostolic delegate. This would satisfy the desire expressed by the Council Fathers that "in consideration of the proper pastoral ministry of the bishops, the office of the legate of the Roman Pontiff be more exactly defined" (*Christus Dominus*, art. 9). On the other hand, the function presently devolving on the nuncios would be de-politicized and would appear more religious. Finally, the task of the defense and fostering of religion undertaken by the local Church would appear more clearly. But one must keep in mind that in certain countries where the regime does not provide authentic religious liberty this solution could involve grave difficulties, since the local episcopate would be in a less independent position in dealing with the political authority.

3. The politics of concordats is still valid today and will be valid until the states have adopted the conciliar doctrine of religious liberty; in fact, until the states proclaim religious liberty not only in the negative sense of placing no obstacles to the development of religious life, but positively in the sense of favouring full religious freedom by just laws and creating the conditions necessary for the development of religious life, the Church will have to defend its own liberty and to set up the conditions for religious development. This can be done, ordinarily, only by means of a concordat. When, however, full and authentic religious liberty has been assured, the Church on its part will be able to do without concordats. These latter are not, moreover, the unique, and much less the perfect, eternal, and definitive form of relationship between the political community and the Church. In fact, the system of concordats, though it has undeniable advantages, yet presents disadvantages in relation to the world of today which is ideologically and religiously pluralistic, since in the eyes of non-Catholics and non-believers

the situation of the Church frequently appears to be privileged ideologically and religiously, and sometimes even economically. This in turn creates ill-feeling towards the Church which is accused of pursuing terrestrial interests, of seeking and defending privileged positions. In reality, although a system of concordats may be a desirable corrective for a system of separation (in the sense of an oppressive regime), yet a system of authentic religious liberty would be preferable to a system of concordats. It would allow the Church to refrain from putting its trust and hope "in the privileges offered by the civil authority" and to renounce "the exercise of certain rights which have been legitimately acquired," in the case where their use casts doubt "on its sincerity and its testimony" (*Gaudium et spes*, art. 76). On the other hand a certain gradualness would be allowable here, and this implies as a first step the revision of those clauses of concordats which do not correspond any longer with the requirements of the times and of the renewal begun by the council, as for example is the case in the concordat with Spain.

4. In the pluralistic world in which we live, it is becoming ever more difficult to entrust to civil laws and to concordats the defense of Christian values and of the positions which allow the Church to exercise its proper religious mission effectively, since it is also becoming difficult to make laws which take account of Christian values or which are favourable to the position of the Church. Therefore the defense of Christian values will not be entrusted so much to the laws of the state, and more to the conscience and the activity of the Catholic laity and to its special office of giving a Christian animation to the temporal. Therefore Catholics must be convinced that the further we advance the less it will be possible to demand and obtain a legal protection of Christianity. Furthermore, it would not be opportune to insist on obtaining such legal protection, since it would appear to others as an unjust privilege, especially if it included conditions favourable to Christianity.

5. The lay character of the state means that the state does not have directly the task of fostering religious and moral advancement, but rather it has a temporal and profane task, to

procure the temporal common good which "takes concrete form in the whole of those social conditions which permit and favour in human beings, in families and in associations, the fuller and easier achievement of their perfection" (*Gaudium et spes*, art. 74), and "consists above all in the safeguard of the rights and duties of the human person" (*Dignitatis humanae*, art. 6). Its lay character imposes upon the state the obligation to take account, in making its laws, of the temporal common good. Now the temporal common good must be determined historically and concretely. In other words, in order to determine what the temporal common good may be the state may not prescind from the historical situation of the political community. For that reason the laws of the state must take account of the historical situation of the political community, of its needs and of its necessities. Now it can happen that the historical situation of the political community may recommend laws and measures which would legally permit things which are not in harmony with Christian principles, nor even with moral principles. In such a case the state—in virtue of the pursuit of the common good of the community, to which it is obliged—is not bound to adapt its positive legislation to each and every moral and religious law; and so it may leave free and render legal even things which are morally illicit. For example, it may permit the diffusion of information concerning contraception and may permit the use of contraceptive instruments and prescriptions if these serve to hinder the practice of abortion on a vast scale. Another example: if the majority of a population desires divorce, the state may legalize divorce in order to guarantee the moral principle of religious and moral freedom. In such a case those Catholics involved in temporal activities (politics, economics, sociology, medicine,) while not accepting the principles which underlie the laws which they enact, divorce for example, in view of the common good for which they are responsible, may contribute to the formulation of such laws, adopting them, but in such a way that the resulting laws diverge as little as possible from moral principles and are as harmless as possible. In this matter two recent documents of the Canadian episcopate consti-

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tute an extremely wise directive for Catholics involved in politics; these can be kept in mind in analogous situations which can easily arise in countries which belong to a so-called "Catholic" tradition.

6. The defense and fostering of religious liberty, which is the task of the state, will imply for the state that in its laws it must take account of the religious and ideological pluralism of the world today; and the state may not impose laws inspired by a particular religion or by a particular moral system (for example, by Christianity and by Christian morality), and it may not call upon religious and moral principles which are not accepted by the great majority. In particular, religious "offences" will not be able to be punished civilly. The state is not competent to judge these crimes unless they are at the same time civil crimes.

7. The concept of the "Christian" state, of Christianity as the state religion with a privileged position, is outmoded. It will still belong to the state to promote religion; not directly, however, but rather by promoting religious liberty and assuring the conditions for the free exercise of religion. The state, that is, will not be able to enclose itself in religious indifferentism, since in that case it would not be only a secular, but a secularistic, state; in other words, it would make a choice in the area of religion (since secularism as rejection of religion is a religious choice), and would in this way be declaring its competence in religion. Regarding citizens who have political responsibilities, they must respect the secularity of the state. While being obliged to fulfill their proper role of giving a Christian spirit to political life, yet they may not adopt the ideal of creating a "Christian" state or of looking after the interests of Christianity. They are obliged above all to look after the interests of the common good, infusing indeed the Christian leaven into political life, but not trying to take away from the temporal order its proper autonomy.

8. The necessity of entering into dialogue with others, of collaborating for common objectives in the temporal order, should cause Christians to overcome the notions of "ghetto" and "defense" which are at the base of many Catholic activities and institutions and of many movements of Catholic action. That is,

Catholics should participate increasingly in "secular" movements, seeking to bring to them their Christian witness and properly Christian ideas. In turn, the institutions and movements of Christian education will have to remain and to be thoroughly re-invigorated. They are necessary for the formation of apostles and of Christians capable of bringing into secular movements the Christian witness and the presence of Christian principles.

## 3.

What I have said so far should not be understood as implying a demobilization of the Church. Of course, certain positions tenaciously defended at one time will have to be abandoned without regret, even while feeling the pain of separation that this must cause in the living flesh of the Church. This much is required by the world's passage from a sacral to a secular phase by the passage from a regime of Christianity to a regime of laity and of secularity,—a passage which is characteristic of the modern world. But the abandonment of old positions is not a demobilization; it is rather the recovery by the Church of its true position in human society. To clarify my thought it is necessary here to make a distinction in the concept of the Church. The Church, in fact, may be understood in two senses: in the sense of a hierarchical institution of salvation, and in the sense of the people of God joined together in the unity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The abandonment of old positions of which I have spoken does not apply to the Church as the people of God, but applies rather to the Church as a hierarchical institution. As people of God, the Church in abandoning old positions seeks to gain other ones, seeks to establish herself in the very heart of the modern world, striving to take part with the greatest intensity in the life, the activity, the suffering of humanity. In other words, there is a twofold movement taking place in the Church: a movement of greater penetration into the world and a movement of detachment from the world, a movement of

incarnation in the temporal and a movement of disengagement from temporal tasks.

But what is the value of this disengagement of the Church as hierarchical institution from temporal and worldly tasks? Certainly it is not a flight into eschatologism or into spiritualism. The Church goes outside of the world in order to be more present to the world as a spiritual guide to humanity, as the moral conscience of the world. In fact it is precisely its existence outside of the fray which allows the Church to exercise its proper function—namely, the prophetic function of teaching and of challenging, the function of bringing men to face their particular religious and moral responsibilities in every area of life, both individual and social. For example, the speech of Paul VI at the United Nations and the encyclical *Populorum progressio* would not have been possible if the Church were immersed in temporal tasks.

In conclusion, in the next decades many things will change in the civil and political fields as a result of the renewal of the Church brought about by the Council. It is a matter now of foreseeing such changes and of preparing Christians to accept them in a good spirit and with courage, so that it will not happen, as happened too often in the past, that Christians will be opposed to the inevitable course of history, with the result that they are placed outside the course of history and pushed out to the fringes of civil life, being, in short, not the builders of the world of tomorrow, but strangers to it and merely tolerated by it. In reality, the new "secular" world which is coming to birth before our eyes possesses for its part valid building blocks for the construction of the kingdom of God; it remains for the Christians of today to read the "signs of the times" and to prepare themselves to live Christianly in a future world which has already begun, so that once again Christ, according to the beautiful expression of Tertullian, will be the "*new king of the new age*."

## NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

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